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A musician at heart

Teen takes Carnegie Hall stage for second time

See story on page 72

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"For many, the league is a lifelong membership." – *Wendy Avery*

See story page 57

ON THE COVER

Noah Mathog, 13, has performed at Carnegie Hall at ages 8 and 13. The King Philip Middle School seventh-grader started playing piano in first grade.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
See story page 72

4 The other Webster Library
7 Linda Putkonen teaches skating
11 Meet Christy Scott
13 Catholic schools merge
16 Conard's improv group performs
19 Fulfilling God's mission
25 LIFE in the kitchen: Iron & Grain Co.
28 Meatless Mondays
31 Living spaces
41 Home Design District
52 44 things to know about Route 44
57 Junior League to celebrate 95th year
62 Kids LIFE
75 Police support fellow officer
79 A new leash on LIFE
88 Writer's block: coming clean

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Photos by Lynn Woike

Left: Minister of Spiritual Life Rev. Susan Izard and the Rev. Dr. Geordie Campbell, senior minister, stand beside a print of a tree, the new symbol for the J.P. Webster Library. **Above top:** The J.P. Webster Library, on the second floor of the First Church of Christ Congregational, has been newly renovated, furnished and updated with the latest technology. **Above bottom:** The children's corner of the library has colorful and cozy seating.

The other Webster Library

First Church houses a newly renovated center with a diverse collection of spiritual resources

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Everyone knows the Noah Webster Library on South Main Street, but not everyone knows that in the 18th century, members of the First Church of Christ Congregational first organized a subscription library. In 1837, Noah Webster, who was baptized in the church, donated 78 books. From that, the West Hartford Library Association evolved.

First Church, located immediately north of the Noah Webster Library, also began a second Webster Library – this one named after the Rev. John Peters Webster (1921-2013), a beloved senior minister at First Church. A graduate of Amherst College, Bangor Theological Seminary, Hartford Theological Seminary, Andover Newton Theological School and the Institutes of Religion and Health in New York City, he came as an associate minister in 1952 and became senior pastor in 1957 – a position he held for 26 years. He also served as pastor of churches in Massachusetts and Maine.

Webster was a poet and the author of the 1997 book, "Rekindle the Fire! Antidote to Burnout."

The library that bears his name was founded in 1978 with a bequest by philanthropist Florence S. M. Crofut, a Hartford historian and the author of five books who joined First Church when she was 88 years old.

She took a liking to the pastor who visited her, the Rev. Dr. Geordie Campbell said.

"She wanted to ensure the pastors had adequate reading material, but it got bigger than that."

In 1962, Crofut endowed a collection of religious resources named in honor of the senior minister of First Church. Upon her death in 1974, one-third of her estate was bequeathed to the church to establish "an outstanding New England church library to be known as the John P. Webster Library."

It has remained a lasting legacy to the church and the community.

Minister of Spiritual Life Rev. Susan Izard said, "The library is a treasure for our church, and the endowment has allowed us to have a nice collection of books and media. It's not strictly a theological library, but focuses on spirituality. We have a diverse collection that goes beyond Christian and Protestant faith traditions as we explore interfaith dialogue of the sacred in our midst."

Shelves contain 6,600 religious and secular books, DVDs, audiobooks and CDs to engage religious and spiritual growth, inspiration, learning and fellowship for all ages, including children.

"In our collection, we have a book written by [Crofut] in her official capacity as the state chairman of the Committee on Preservation of Historic Spots of the Connecticut Daughters of the American Revolution. The title of the work, in two volumes, is 'Guide to the History and the Historic Sites of Connecticut,' published in 1937 by

Yale University Press, New Haven," said Julie Rio, library assistant.

"The heartbeat of the church is to be an organic space for exploring and understanding the holy," Campbell said, calling the library "one of the treasures of our faith," and adding, "It's just been invaluable to our ministry."

Recently completed renovations totaling $175,000 stemmed from the complete evaluation done by the church three years ago for its 200th anniversary, Izard said. Work began last June, taking the classic library from a musty room of books to a bright, inviting media center with a focus on outreach. The latest technology and a new air system were installed. The new chairs and tables fold and roll, making it possible to configure them to suit a variety of groups and activities. There's a children's table, a window seat and two cozy chairs that share a side table.

"Old buildings are a challenge … but we did it," Izard said.

Three offices, a vestibule and the area with shelves of books total about 2,000 square feet.

The John P. Webster Library is open to the public. It is a member of the statewide library system, iConn.

Each Monday at noon, more than two dozen people – not all of whom are members of the church – meet for the book discussion group, Awakening the Spirit.

Its other programs and services include research assistance, a secular book discussion group, book kits for loan and an art gallery. The library has also hosted guest speakers covering such topics as the mystical qualities of the Gospel of John and Celtic Christian spirituality. Last year, Rabbi Rami Shapiro gave a retreat on Perennial Wisdom for the Spiritually Independent.

The library is a resource for clergy across the denominations not only within the state, but also beyond, Campbell said, adding that not all

Photos by Lynn Woike

Top left: **This Webster Library is located in the First Church of Christ Congregational.** **Top right:** **The Rev. John Peters Webster (1921-2013) was a beloved senior minister at First Church.** **Bottom:** **New chairs offer a comfortable place to sit and read.**

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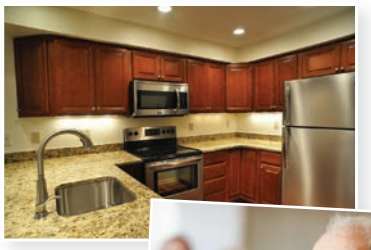

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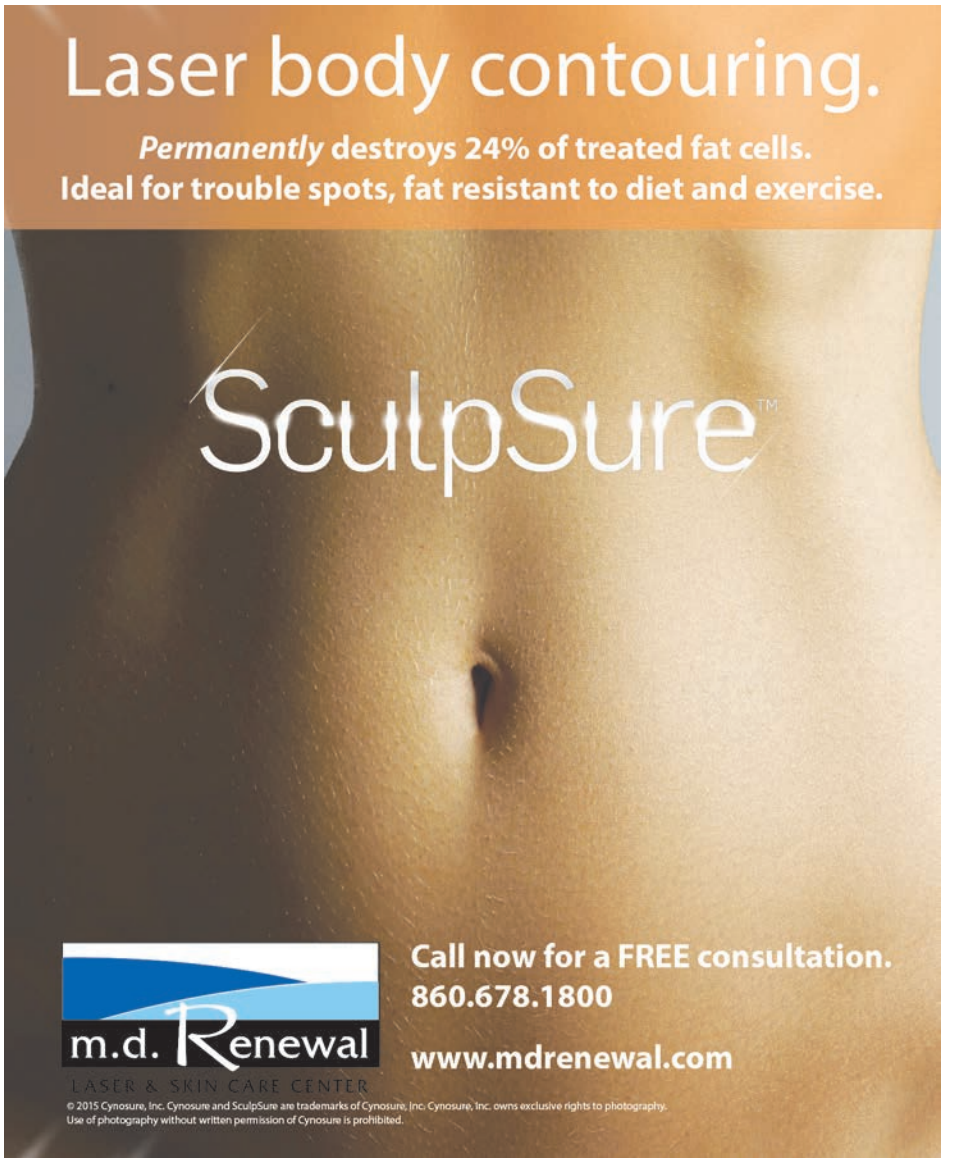
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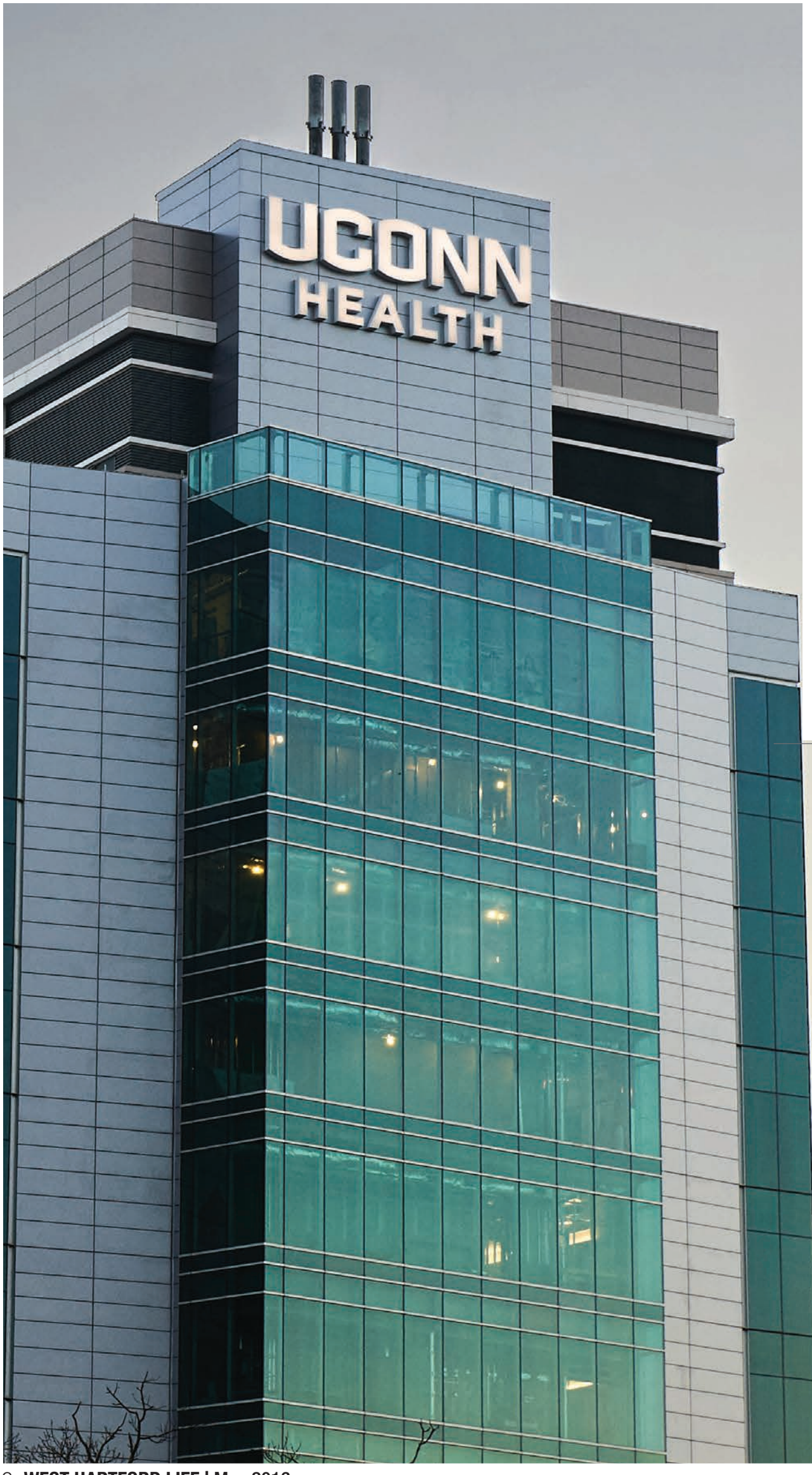

churches are able to purchase multiple copies of books "and we can share."

The Rev. Dr. Denise Esslinger of Gilead Congregational Church in Hebron has taken advantage of that. Her church has borrowed sets of books for its weekly book group.

"It's wonderful that they offer that," she said.

Noting the library's many resources, she said, "I think it's really a hidden gem."

The offerings go beyond the spiritual.

"I love to read fiction, and they have a nice selection [of] current fiction that's on the best-seller list," Esslingen said.

In a nearby climate-controlled room, historical archives are housed.

Because the town began with the formation of the church in the early 18th century, the history of both are interwoven and can be seen in records, photographs, books and other memorabilia.

Researchers may request an appointment to use archival records by contacting the library.

A selection of historical documents is available through the digital collection, Treasures of Connecticut Libraries, courtesy of the West Hartford Public Library and the Connecticut State Library. **WHL**

On ice

Linda Putkonen has been teaching skating for decades

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

Skating Coach Linda Putkonen details how to skate a pinwheel to her Learn to Skate students who were preparing for the annual spring performance in May.

Photos by Alicia B. Smith

A group of older residents were sitting on the benches in the lobby of the Veterans Memorial Skating Rink taking off their skates when Learn to Skate director Linda Putkonen took a seat at a nearby table.

She was in between lessons from her early morning students and those she would see later that afternoon.

The rink is a home away from home for her.

"I try to instill in the girls you can do anything. Work at it; you never know

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UCONN HEALTH

Photo by Alicia B. Smith

Skating coach Linda Putkonen still laughs about the way she became a coach, but her dedication to her students is no laughing matter. She has been instructing figure skaters for 38 years at the Veterans Memorial Skating Rink.

what can happen," she said. "I laugh all the time at how I started."

Putkonen's introduction to the rink came when she was a child and her father was hired to drive the ice-resurfacing machine when the rink first opened in 1968. While her dad got out on the ice, she never did.

Years later, as a teenager, Putkonen got a job at the rink as a cashier. One day, shortly after starting, the rink manager told her they needed her to coach a skating class.

With widened eyes and a vigorous nod "no," Putkonen recalled telling her boss she did not know how to skate, and being told a teacher was needed and she was it. She laughed as she remembers putting on a pair of skates from the rental shelves.

"Trying to stay vertical was my goal," Putkonen recalled.

Not long after that, her manager offered her a job as a skating coach. Despite reiterating the fact that she could not skate, Putkonen was hired.

It was not her skating that had caught his attention, it was her interaction with the children and the way she could teach them that had intrigued her boss.

Putkonen would later go on to use her skills connecting to children as a teacher.

She attended the University of Hartford, earning a degree in education, then working seven years as a special education teacher in the West Hartford Public Schools before taking time off to raise her son. Through all of this she kept her job as a skating coach.

When Putkonen began as a coach she used a pair of unclaimed skates that had been in the lost and found. She decided before she could teach others to skate she had to learn how to do it herself, signed up for an adult Learn to Skate program and received encouragement from her coaches. She also took private lessons and was able to pass a series of proficiency tests required to teach.

"It was not natural to me," she said of skating. "I struggled."

Part of the challenge was that coaching requirements kept changing. Putkonen worked through then until she earned the credentials to be a senior coach.

"I think the advantage I have as a coach is I come from a teaching background. I look at the whole person."

–Linda Putkonen

"I think the advantage I have as a coach is I come from a teaching background. I look at the whole person," she said, adding that this approach helps her form a bond with her students.

Jeffrey Teitler is the father of Jarah Teitler, who has been taking lessons from Putkonen for a few years. While watching one of the annual skating shows put on at the rink, he began to view skating in a whole new way.

"I was simply taken," Teitler said. "I observed a mass of young individuals, including my daughter, who were undeniably in a process of transformation. Each skater moved in specific, focused and increasingly complicated ways. They were not only skating, but also thinking and problem solving with passion and fun – all of which spoke to what really good teaching does – and Linda is a great teacher."

He has witnessed skaters develop and progress under Putkonen's tutelage.

"Year by year she develops young individuals and in her own humble way, has built an extraordinarily nurturing culture within the figure skating track," he said.

Jarah, 10, said she's improved after a few years of being coached by Putkonen.

"I like to do half flips," Jarah said. "It was so much trouble for me in the beginning. I was doing other tricks at the end of the movement because I didn't know what else to do. Linda corrected me several times and now I do it without even thinking. It's easy now."

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Dr. Hwang, an ophthalmologist, has joined the medical staff at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center.

Dr. Hwang received his medical degree from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, New York. He completed his residency in ophthalmology at the Doheny Eye Institute, University of Southern California Medical Center, Los Angeles, and a fellowship in glaucoma at the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

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Jarah said her interest in the sport grew out of a movie she had seen in which skating "looked majestic." It was about this time she began her lessons.

"While skating felt scary in the beginning, the more I practiced, the more it seemed to really fit," she said.

She described her coach as "fun and exciting," explaining Putkonen developed "Jarah dances" to teach her different skills.

"One of them is similar to a Russian dance. The other is a skating technique and the final is … a surprise that you'll see in my upcoming skating show," Jarah said.

Teitler, a communications professor at Central Connecticut State University and owner of his own production company, Envision Films, has been so impressed with what he has seen on the ice, he made a short video of Putkonen working with her students as way to thank her for all she does.

"I want to thank Linda who is really an exciting skating coach and makes me want to continue," Jarah said. "When I started, I had stage fright. Through working with Linda for many years, I am able to figure skate in a packed rink."

Although she is no longer teaching in the classroom, Putkonen loves teaching on the ice. She has had young skaters tell her they are too old to learn the sport. Again she laughs, assuring them that "oh no," they are not too old.

Skating can be isolating with long, lonely hours at the rink early in the morning or late in the evening. Putkonen knows that if they do not love the sport, they will not stay with it.

"I try to instill my love of skating in everybody," she said, adding that she tries to have fun with her students and make their training an enjoyable experience.

Through her years at the rink, Putkonen has seen the sport change. What once had been an exclusive experience for many has since become more inclusive.

"My influence on this rink is to make it something everyone can do," she said of skating.

Figure skating can be expensive.

Photo by Alicia B. Smith

Her fellow coaches and her Learn to Skate students surround Linda Putkonen, a skating coach at the Veterans Memorial Skating Rink. Putkonen has been coaching at the rink for 38 years.

In addition to the cost of lessons, skates are pricey, as are the outfits. Years ago, Putkonen created what she calls Linda's Boutique, accepting donations of skates and costumes that no longer fit her students. These items are offered to other skaters that may not be able to afford them. All Putkonen asks is that when an individual is done with an item or they can no longer use it, they donate it back to the boutique.

"It's all about passing it on," she said.

Putkonen oversees a staff of about 20 coaches; many who began skating as children under her tutelage.

Abigail Agreda, 18, began skating

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with Putkonen when she was 10 and is now a coach. She said Putkonen built her self-confidence through positive reinforcement, teaching her how to push herself and work harder.

"There's no yelling or screaming," she said.

Through the years, Putkonen has fostered camaraderie among the staff and visitors to the rink. The feeling, she said, cannot be found at other facilities, and she credits it for not only drawing skaters to her Learn to Skate program and private lessons, but also for keeping turnover among coach low.

With the Learn to Skate program Putkonen said her main goal is to ensure skaters enjoy their time on the ice so they return the following week.

"Your environment is so different on the ice. It can be scary out there, it's cold, it's slippery," Putkonen said, so making new skaters feel comfortable is a large part of what instructors do.

Off the ice, skaters first learn how to stay upright. On the ice, they are taught how to fall and the best way to get up back on their skates safely. Slowly, they will learn how to move forward, first with a marching like movement and then learning to glide. Eventually the more advanced skill of sculling – sliding both feet out and bringing them together – is taught. From there skaters learn to push off one foot, then the other so that they are truly skating over the surface in what is called stroking the ice.

If they like the sport, many new skaters begin taking private and group lessons.

"Our private coaches charge significantly less than others in the area," Putkonen said.

Some of her students have competed at the senior level and participate in a number of local competitions as well as at the Nutmeg State Games.

Increasingly, more of her former students are continuing at the collegiate level. Figure skating is not a sanctioned sport by the NCAA, but there are college competitions throughout the country. Individuals earn points for their team while skating at their specific skill level.

Putkonen has traveled to see some of her former students compete at MIT and Cornell.

Putkonen considers herself fortunate to be on the ice at all. Three years ago she suffered a brain bleed while driving home to South Windsor from the rink, and stopped by the home of a former student to get help. She was brought to the hospital and released a few hours later only to return to the hospital that night after passing out. Surgery was required to stop the bleeding.

While she was fortunate not to suffer an aneurism, after being unconscious for two weeks, the recovery was lengthy. Several students came to visit her.

When she came to, her husband asked her what she was doing when she waving her hands around. Putkonen recalled only that she was choreographing a figure skating routine.

She was off the ice while getting therapy to learn to talk and walk again. While doctors suggested she not return to the ice, she did not consider that an option, and through determination, learned to skate all over again. Students' families volunteered to drive her to and from the rink.

"I am so lucky," Putkonen said, not just for recovering from her health scare but for the love and support she received from her family and students. Each year she celebrates a re-birthday on the anniversary of the day she first became ill.

"I owe people so much," she said. "The doctors kept saying you couldn't do that. Yes I can."

Twenty years ago Putkonen hosted a spring performance at the rink for her students and the tradition continues; this year's theme is the 1950s. Students from her Learn to Skate program will take to the ice in poodle skirts in a show that includes individual and group performances. This year's event will be held May 14 from 1-3 p.m. **WHL**

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Courtesy photo

The governor appointed West Hartford resident Christy Scott as the new claims commissioner.

Meet Christy Scott

Newly appointed claims commissioner

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

When Christy Scott was in college she had a decision to make: study literature or study law. The law won.

Originally from Florida, Scott came to the Northeast to attend Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. She later came to Connecticut to study law at the University of Connecticut Law School and settled in West Hartford, where she has lived for more than a decade.

While she has practiced law for most of her professional life, she did not give up entirely on her love of literature and became an English teacher at Farmington High School for a time, eventually returning to law.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy appointed Scott the new Connecticut claims commissioner.

In a statement he said, "The Claims Commission serves a critical role for our state's residents, and is responsible for ensuring a thoughtful, reasoned and fair process for those bringing claims against the state. I am pleased Christy has accepted this appointment and look forward to having her serve in this role."

Since 2007, Scott served as an attorney in the Connecticut General Assembly Majority Office, a role in which she advised the speaker of the house and the house majority leader. Other roles include serving as clerk for the Connecticut State Supreme Court and a job as managing director and legal counsel for the state's Office of the Child Advocate.

As Scott settled into her new role she took some time to answer questions for West Hartford LIFE.

Q: What drew you into the law profession?

A: When I was in college I had sort of two interests. I was both interested in literature and also wanted to feel like I could make changes in society, those were the two things I cared most about. I decide to go to law school to learn some tools to make a difference.

Q: You worked for many years in a political realm. What interested you in this area of the law?

A: When I first graduated from law school I went into private practice and focused on litigation. I had the opportunity to clerk at the Connecticut Supreme Court. After a

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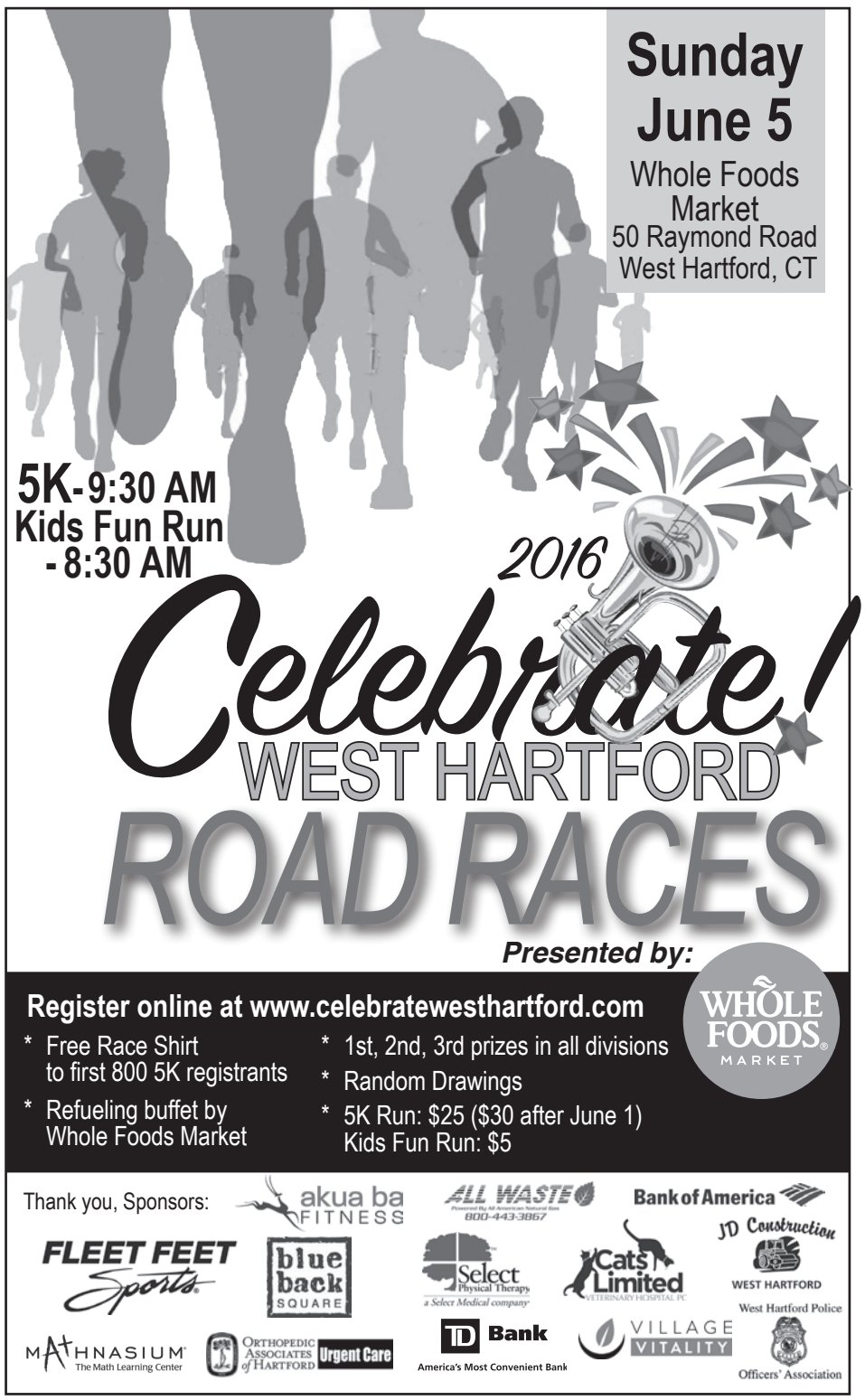

"I always knew I wanted to make people's lives better, and public service is a way to do that."

–Christy Scott

year of clerking I took a job at the attorney general's office, worked in the health unit, and still carried a litigation caseload. While at the attorney general's office, I was really interested in policy and took a job working for a lobbyist representing nonprofits. I enjoyed the work. While there, the child advocate knew me and asked me to be deputy of the agency. … I liked the work, liked working with kids. I went off to be an English teacher, decided law is where I wanted to be, and l came back to law and landed at the legislature.

Q: What experiences from the classroom did you take with you when you returned to the law profession? How does your work in the classroom compare to your work as a lawyer?

A: I would say that it did a couple of things. It helped me to learn to be tough. If you can handle a classroom of ninth graders you can handle any room you need to walk into. It helped me slow down and help people understand concepts better. When you learn how to be a teacher, that really translates into life, how to convey concepts. It really helped me be a better communicator in general I think.

It was a lot more fun to be in the classroom. Teenagers tend to be a lot of fun, particularly in the grades I worked; they don't take themselves too seriously. … The classroom attitude of curiosity and risk taking, I enjoyed that.

Q: Can you share with me what the office of claims commissioner is responsible for?

A: [It's a] concept we borrowed from the English, sovereign immunity – you can't sue the government unless the government gives you the OK to do so. In Connecticut there are some statutes [that prevent you from suing] the government in court, instead you have to come here to the claims commission. The commission reviews your claim. If it was for a private person and if the state is liable, [the] claims commission awards either a money amount or grants permission to sue if people are asking for that.

For large claims and for permission to sue, the legislature has ability to review the claims. For smaller claims, they become final without legislative review.

Q: Do you have any new initiatives you would like to bring to the claims commission department?

A: Streamlining all of our processes. We have some funding to implement new software programs; it will give us powerful management tools for our internal processees but will create a public portal where the public can track claims. I expect our whole office will be more modern and tech savvy in 12 months; that is really my mandate, to come in here to modernize and streamline the processees and make it a better experience for folks who do have a claim against the state.

Q: What do you consider to be the biggest life lesson you've learned?

A: Patience, from my son. I have an 18 year old. Every point along the way of becoming a parent you learn different ways you need to be patient in order be to be a good parent. I learned to challenge myself to be a good sensitive, thoughtful parent.

Q: Do you have any great success or failures that impacted you as a person or a leader?

A: When I was living in Manchester many years ago, I was on the board of directors there, their town council. We had the opportunity to build a playground on a piece of land we had. When I heard about this … there were not a lot of playgrounds for children with disabilities. Boundless Playgrounds was around; they were really working hard and I knew some of the folks working there. Once I had that idea, a lot of people were saying, "Nah, nah, nah; let's just do what we were planning on doing." Once convinced, it was so exciting. … We had folks from every part of our community engaged. I considered that one of by biggest successes.

Q: When you began your career did you ever see yourself as the state claims commissioner?

A: No. I'm not sure I knew the office of claims commission existed, but I knew I wanted to be in public service so I am not surprised I ended up where I am. I always knew I wanted to make people's lives better, and public service is a way to do that. **WHL**

Courtesy photo

Saint Brigid School Principal Shevon Hickey and the Rev. Joseph Crowley will welcome the students from Hartford's Saint Augustine School this fall when St. Brigid-St. Augustine: A Partnership School begins for the 2016-17 school year.

Catholic schools merge

Saint Brigid and Saint Augustine form partnership

by Alison Jalbert
Assistant Editor

This fall, Saint Brigid School will partner with Saint Augustine School in Hartford to form St. Brigid-St. Augustine: A Partnership School, educating pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade students.

The idea to create this partnership school came after Saint Augustine learned the necessary upgrades to its building would cost more than $8 million. Upgrades included structural repairs, classroom maintenance and technological upgrades, according to a press release from the Archdiocese of Hartford.

The Rev. Joseph Crowley, pastor of Saint Brigid, received a phone call from the pastor at Saint Augustine, the Rev. José Mercado, who explained his school's predicament.

"I began to realize that there was a potential partnership in them coming down here," Crowley said. "They did a very extensive study on their building and decided they can't put that kind of money into a building. They're only three miles away – it made sense."

Crowley and Mercado have known each other since 1998 and were in seminary together for eight years.

"We're great friends. It made it easier to partner," he said.

Saint Brigid Principal Shevon Hickey said the school "definitely [has] room to grow," so taking on additional students was not an issue.

Once the partnership was considered a viable option, Crowley said it was necessary to consult with Archbishop Leonard Blair of the Hartford Archdiocese, the staff of the Office of Catholic Schools, the school board of Saint Brigid and the schools' respective parish finance councils. The feasibility of the partnership was discussed, as was the direction in which the school would go.

"The archbishop gave us his blessing," Crowley said. "We kind of worked together – two Catholic bodies, all on the same team. It's clear you can't turn your back if there's someone in need. When Catholics work together, great things happen."

The partnership, which is meant to preserve the traditions, cultures and best practices of both schools, will start at the beginning

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of the 2016-17 school year. The decision was made to relocate Saint Augustine to the site of Saint Brigid.

Bus transportation from Hartford to Elmwood will be provided at no cost to families, and tuition assistance will be made available for current students relocating to the new school.

The amount of Saint Augustine faculty taken on will be driven by the budget and class sizes, Hickey said, and they hope to place as many of them as they can.

An advantage of the partnership is having more students, Hickey said, which enables the sharing of cultures and diversity. With more families coming, the sense of community will grow, too.

"With the closing of Saint Augustine's building, we'll be able to get a lot of their technology," she said. "They have significant upgrades, so we'll be able to benefit from that."

The partnership strengthens the Catholic identities of families in the South End of Hartford, Crowley said.

"The Saint Augustine facility is not as accommodating as ours. It's a huge building, but it doesn't have three, four acres of grass. We have Beachland Park; they're surrounded by housing. They'll strengthen what we have and we'll strengthen what they have. We'll go back to our homes and grow our Catholic families and our Catholic identification," he said.

Opportunities will also arise in academics and extracurricular activities. Hickey said Saint Augustine didn't have a lot of sports, whereas Saint Brigid has always had sports and extracurricular activities. Due to lower enrollment, however, more players are needed.

The drama club and music ministry are other things Hickey said will be enhanced by Saint Augustine's students. The two schools share a couple of resources already, including an art teacher who teaches in both facilities, so there is already a lot of collaboration going on, Crowley said.

Hickey and her counterpart at Saint Augustine, Helen Treacy, have been working with their respective pastors and school communities to make sure the transition is easy for everyone involved. Partnership Day was held March 18, where Saint Augustine students came to Saint Brigid School, taking tours of the building, participating in school activities and socializing with their future classmates. Five busloads of students and their families came, Hickey said.

"It was a great day. The kids from Saint Augustine seemed to really enjoy it, and our kids enjoyed it," she said. "We're talking about doing a field day together [before the end of the school year]. The nice thing is our Catholic faith is what we're here for. It's no different than at Saint Augustine. It's been the common denominator from the get-go."

Along with this partnership, there have been a couple others in Greater Hartford, with one recently forming in Southington, Crowley said.

"I think what they're realizing at the archdiocese is there's a lot of strength when we work together," he said. "Luckily, in the Catholic church, there's no competition because we're all on the same team. When people see that, great things happen. People are more open to look around and say, 'How do we make things better?'"

He believes this is a time where Catholic education is something that some families are interested in but don't know enough about. Hickey said once the partnership was announced, the school received many phone calls from families unaffiliated with either school looking for a Catholic education.

She explained that Catholic education is different than public education.

"We have very high standards, and we don't do Common Core. All Catholic schools in the Hartford archdiocese follow the same curriculum standards. It gives us the ability to differentiate and work with students."

"We're able to educate the kids in a way other schools can't," Crowley said, adding that the transition for the Saint Augustine students will be easier because the curriculum between the schools is the same. "Catholic schools have an incredible record that has been standing for 80, 90 years for the best education. It's something we're still striving to maintain."

Saint Brigid celebrated its 55th Annual Gala April 29, and Saint Augustine alumni were invited to attend. Hickey said both schools have "a great history of alumni," something they want to maintain.

"Every day we're here, it's about the Catholic faith, whether it's in Mass or any other subject," she said. **WHL**

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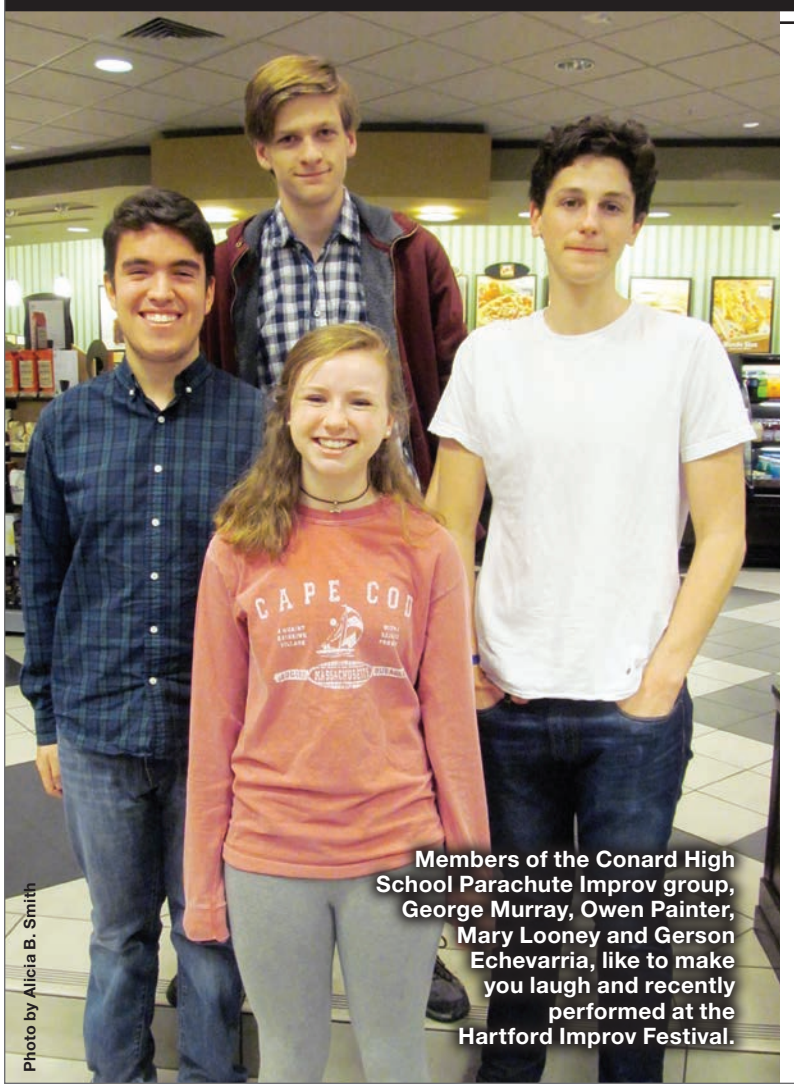

Photo by Alicia B. Smith

Members of the Conard High School Parachute Improv group, George Murray, Owen Painter, Mary Looney and Gerson Echevarria, like to make you laugh and recently performed at the Hartford Improv Festival.

Dropping in to success

Conard's Parachute improv performs on many stages

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

Audience members came for the laughs at this year's Hartford Improv Festival and were not disappointed. Included in the groups that performed was West Hartford's own Parachute, an improv group comprised of students from Conard High School. It was the group's third time performing at the festival, which features improv groups from across the country.

Hartford's professional improv group, Sea Tea Improv, hosts the annual Hartford Improv Festival and last year issued an invitation to Parachute to be the first student group to perform when they open their new theater, Sea Tea Comedy Theater at 15 Asylum Street in Hartford.

"It's really nice to have the biggest improv group in it be so supportive," senior Gerson Echevarria said.

Several members of Parachute are involved because a friend told them to come and see what the group was all about. Many were hesitant, but now admit it is one of the best things they have done.

Gerson was asked by fellow Parachute member Owen Painter to come and check it out.

"I went once, thought, 'I guess I'll audition,'" Gerson said. "I've been in it ever since. The shows are some of the best times of the year."

"I never expected to do Parachute," Mary Looney said. "My freshman year a friend was going to lead the group. I had no idea what I was doing." she admitted, adding that the day of her audition she did not attend until her friend called asking where she was.

Next year, as a senior, Mary will be leading the group.

IMPROV continued on page 76

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Photo by Amanda Trajan

The Rev. Dana Campbell and June Aziz are vesting The Very Rev. Miguelina Howell with the cape prior to the seating ceremony on the occasion of Howell's installation as dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford in February.

Fulfilling God's mission

Miguelina Howell appointed dean of historic church

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

The Very Rev. Miguelina "Lina" Howell is breaking new ground as the first Latina priest elected dean of Hartford's historic downtown Episcopal Church. She became Christ Church Cathedral's 10th dean in November 2015 after serving as its vicar, and was formally installed on February 18.

Howell, who was born and raised in the Dominican Republic, knew early on that she had a calling.

"I'm a cradle Episcopalian – a lifelong Episcopalian to use a more known term. I was raised in an Episcopalian family that instilled Christian values in me. It was just part of the fabric of my upbringing," Howell said of being taught "the importance of God in my life and being part of a community."

She is the Cathedral's first woman and the first Hispanic woman to be elected a cathedral dean in the Episcopal Church.

Her involvement in the church started when she was young, participating in the youth ministry, attending camps and retreats. By the time she was in her teens, she was already finding her voice.

"I was given the opportunity to lead reflections and be fully part of the planning processes. I was blessed by the guidance and support of amazing mentors who saw in me gifts for leadership. I started participating at the local level within my home church, and then the regional level in the Dominican Republic.

"When I was 19 years old, leaders of the Episcopal Church in Latino America invited me to serve as coordinator for youth ministry in the province, which comprises seven countries. That appointment was the beginning of my longstanding involvement at the wider church level," said Howell, who traveled to Africa when she was 15 as a representative of the church. "That was one of my first experiences with the wider community."

She was 14 when she recognized the call to serve as an ordained minister

"I remember wanting to visit a convent. The rector of the parish said, 'Why don't you go spend some time and see her ministry?' I thought my calling was to be an Episcopalian nun. I recognized after experiencing her ministry that it was possible for a female to serve as priest. Clergy at my home parish had always been male, even to this day. When I was exposed to experience the ministry of a female clergy, it was an 'aha' moment, an epiphany," she said. "I wanted to go

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Photo by Amanda Trajan

The Very Rev. Miguelina Howell is the first Latina priest elected dean of Hartford's historic downtown Episcopal Church.

straight to seminary when I graduated high school; my parents were not in agreement."

She acceded to their wishes, and ended up studying and getting her degree as a clinical psychologist.

"My parents were determined to help me go to graduate school. My parents did not have a formal education. They worked very hard for us not just to have a formal education but the best education possible," Howell said.

While she ended up studying psychology, she considered other majors.

"I had a passion for architecture and veterinary – not that they're related," she said with a laugh.

She remained certain of her path, and as she finished her graduate studies and licensing as a clinical psychologist, she earned a theological degree from the Centro de Estudios Teologicos and was ordained a priest in 2003.

"I was clear the path was to pursue ordination. I went to graduate school knowing the next step was to go to seminary and become a clergy. I worked at the diocesan house, the headquarters of the diocese while I was doing post-graduate internship at a local hospital. While I was doing my thesis on geriatric depression, I entered the seminary. I'm not sure if it was academically the wisest decision, but it worked; it worked very well. I presented my dissertation when I was in my last year of seminary," Howell said. "It was my long-term plan. Since I realized when I was 14 that the Lord was calling me to become a priest, my whole life was shaped by that calling for which I'm grateful."

Howell served three congregations in the Dominican Republic and as the executive director of the Diocesan Camp and Conference Center. She also has served as a member of the Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop's staff as associate program officer for Young Adult Ministries and Leadership Recruitment at the Episcopal Church Center in New York City, which led to her moving to the United States.

For two and a half years, she commuted between New York City and the Dominican Republic every two weeks.

"After that intensive commuting, I finally accepted that the Lord was calling me for full-time ministry in this country. I was very resistant to do that, as I thought the Lord was calling me to be in the DR and serve the DR for life. I felt a sense of loyalty to my diocese in the DR," she explained. "Then I met my now-husband [Daniel] and I think that had a significant influence on my final decision."

They met at an Episcopalian youth event in Kentucky in 2005.

"We stayed in touch and saw each other at different events. We tried long-distance dating, but that didn't

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work," she said.

The couple has been married for five years.

Howell served parishes in Orange and Patterson, New Jersey, before coming to Hartford in 2013 to serve as vicar.

She said there are different challenges between serving congregations in the Dominican Republic and those in the United States.

"In the Dominican Republic, the ministry becomes challenging due to a lack of financial resources. It's a lively community seeking to be present and active in the life of church and their participation in God's mission. Being a member of a community of faith is part of the fabric of the culture; it's still relevant in that society. It still has a prominent role in the life of families and the community. The financial resources create a real limitation in how much is possible to accomplish there," she explained.

"Even though here, the landscape of church has changed and there's a real need for financial resources, there are more financial resources available than in a diocese overseas. While there are more resources available, it seems to me that being formally part of a community of faith is not as relevant as it was decades ago. We're competing with soccer and football and dance classes. While those are very good for the soul as well, they aren't necessarily faith-oriented or religious."

Last year, Howell broke several barriers when she was appointed dean at the church.

"It is a fact that I'm the first female of Latino heritage to serve as dean. I think that it may have an impact as how the ministry is perceived. However, what is relevant in this case is that that the cathedral is going through a revival and a renewed sense of self and that's what makes this exciting. It's a time of creativity; it's a time of openness to the spirit; a historic time for the church to be relevant and present, and that to me makes this journey very unique," she said.

"When I was exposed to experience the ministry of a female clergy, it was an 'aha' moment, an epiphany."

–The Very Rev. Miguelina Howell

The dean of the church serves as its senior clergy.

"I'm the primary clergy responsible for the day-to-day operations. I have responsibility for its liturgical life. I have responsibility for overseeing its staff, the lay and clergy staff for different areas of the ministry, and, in this particular context, engaging the arts, the city, the wider Episcopal community," explained Howell who lives in West Hartford with her husband, Daniel, and their dogs, Tallulah, a 9-year-old French bulldog and Paddington, an almost 2-year-old Boston terrier.

She has recently served on the Episcopal Church's National Task Force for Reimagining the Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Church Executive Council, and is a member of The Episcopal Church Latino/Hispanic Ministries Council of Advice.

"What continues to amaze me about Lina is her wisdom," said Lucy Groening, a member of the congregation for 19 years, who is chair of the Parish Committee at Christ Church Cathedral and has worked with Howell for two years as her elected lay leadership.

"I have watched her deal with difficult situations with calm and with focus and with reconciliation. Her emotional maturity serves her and us well. She had led the cathedral through a difficult time of transition with energy, creativity and leadership."

Groening went on to say, "Lina came to Christ Church Cathedral to work and she takes her job very seriously. She has been a breath of fresh air. The first thing she did when she came was to develop seven ministry teams, drawing us into new service and developing new lay leadership along the way. Her administrative skills and financial acumen are valued. Her pastoral care sensitivities are much appreciated."

Howell is excited about what the church has to offer.

"I love that we are a church that is open, that is inclusive, that has a passion for our prophetic voice that proclaims the message that all God's people are created equal called to respect the dignity of every human being. We're a welcoming church, a church that has a healthy balance between tradition, scripture and reason. That to me is what makes the Episcopal Church amazing," she said.

"It gives a person the opportunity to exercise their gifts and their skills as a thinking human being, at the same time, providing an opportunity for participating in God's mission, experiencing beautiful liturgy and serving God's people. The Episcopal Church offers opportunities that enhance your personal faith journey. Church is just the vehicle in which God's mission takes shapes and forms." **WHL**

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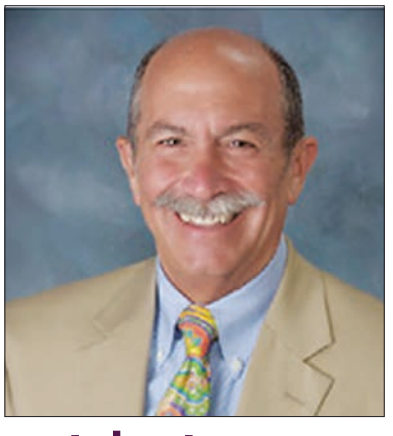

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LIFE in the kitchen

with Iron & Grain Co. co-founders Adam Belward and Tate Norden

by Alison Jalbert
Assistant Editor

West Hartford's newest food truck, Iron & Grain Co., has been three years in the making.

Cousins and co-founders Tate Norden and Adam Belward have always had passions for grilling and cooking, respectively, but neither thought of it as a career path. Norden came from a background of event organization and marketing, while Belward had served in the military and was exploring a traditional college degree.

"I approached him three years ago with the idea for the business, seeing the growing trend for food trucks," Norden said.

Belward, who wasn't enthused by the degree he was pursuing, was interested in the business proposal. Having no prior restaurant experience other than cooking at home, he enrolled in the Culinary Institute of America in New York and did an internship at Dogfish Head Brewpub in Delaware.

They wanted to create something unique and have their truck look different than the typical food truck.

"We really like food; we're also craft beer and wine enthusiasts," Norden said.

In looking for a truck, they wanted a vintage, antique vehicle. They found a 1959 Chevy Viking truck online, an old Alabama farm truck used for hauling massive amounts of corn.

"The aesthetics are very important to the truck, [as much as the] mechanical compliance," Norden said. "I zoomed in on the vehicle [emblem] and saw that it said Viking. My dad was of Swedish heritage; both of my parents were born in Sweden. Viking culture's always been of interest to me. I thought, 'If this isn't a sign, I don't know what is.'"

He thought the truck would serve as a tribute to his late father, and Belward liked the look of the front end.

The side of the truck that faces clients has a wood fire grill, six beer taps and a wine fridge. In brainstorming what foods the truck would serve, Norden said they knew they wanted food that was both popular and palatable.

"We didn't want to do the run-of-the-mill hamburgers and hot dogs," he said. "It's not just a traditional slider – it's stuffed with bleu cheese and bacon, and topped with a quail egg.

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We wanted food that wasn't necessarily super fancy where it seems unattainable, but we wanted to take traditional classics and turn them on their sides a bit."

Belward said the truck's menu changes often.

"We have our core values: sourcing local ingredients and using the wood fire grill," he explained. "We can do different styles of international cuisine. If it's good and we can pull it off the grill, we can do it."

Last fall was the truck's soft launch, and a popular item from that menu was Mexican-style street corn, grilled and topped with chipotle mayonnaise, cheese and a chili spice mixture, garnished with spiced scallions.

A variety of sliders and flatbreads are also among Iron & Grain's repertoire. The sliders are Connecticut grass-fed beef from a farm in Southington. For the flatbreads, local produce is used whenever possible.

Another popular dish is buffalo sprouts. Norden said it consists of two skewers with three Brussels sprouts on each. They're grilled and coated in buffalo seasoning.

"We're starting to see more people do fun things with Brussels sprouts," he said, "There's a still a stigma that the young crowd may not be into them, but they're a great street food."

As much thought was put into the truck's wine and beer offerings. While they cater to the preferences of their customers, they put an emphasis on local beers, such as Black Hog in Oxford, Two Roads in Stratford and the Thomas Hooker Brewing Company in Bloomfield.

"We want to do our part to show that Connecticut has more than what people think."

–Adam Belward

Belward thinks there is a stigma with the food scene in Connecticut, one Iron & Grain hopes to combat.

"[It's] not only people outside of Connecticut, but people inside, too. 'Hey, what does Connecticut have?' We want to do our part to show that Connecticut has more than what people think," he said. "It's kind of important to us."

This year will be Iron & Grain's first full season, with its first booking May 6 at the Thomas Hooker Brewing Company. Norden said there are 15 public events and five private events on the calendar so far.

"We want to make sure we leave a good enough amount of space for private parties, because that's the core business we're looking to cater to," he said.

After the Hooker brewery event, Iron & Grain will be at the Hartford Flavor Company May 13 and Celebrate! West Hartford June 4-5. On June 11, the truck will be at FARE in Willimantic, a new monthly festival featuring street foods, local beer, a farmers' market and more organized by the founders of the Coventry Regional Farmers' Market.

Though they're both fully dedicated to making Iron & Grain a success, Norden still has a day job and Belward is working towards his bachelor's degree in culinary arts management from the CIA

"It's nights and weekends for us right now," Norden said. "It's nice for us to both have other forms of income so we can be putting all of our money back into the business and maintain it."

Belward's degree program gives him the opportunity to choose a concentration, which will enable him to study and work in another location, such as the CIA's campuses in Singapore or Texas. He also chose to extend his education because the CIA has a program with the Brooklyn Brewery, which helped build a brewery on campus.

"There are mixology classes and wine classes," he said. "It's little bits of information we can pull from to help us expand Iron & Grain. We'd love to be brewing our own beer one day."

The concept for Iron & Grain's business model requires having multiple food trucks, Norden explained.

"We're seeing this sort of category grow throughout the entire country. In Connecticut, not as much [due to] seasonality," he said. "To grow, we need to have more than one booking. It's cool in that we know this is our first truck, but we want to have other trucks down the line. It's a fun process – no two trucks are going to be the same. We'll keep the brand intact, but have some vehicles we can pull from."

As Iron & Grain grows, Norden said it's important to keep their commitment to locally sourced food and drink.

"We really started this business not only because we wanted something we found fulfillment out of … but at the end of the day, we wanted to find food we're excited to do for the rest of our lives. In conjunction, we want to do something that's fostering a positive environment throughout the state of Connecticut," he said. "We're supporting local businesses. It's community over competition.

"The local food movement is a growing scene, a growing trend. We're certainly not the first people to try this, but I hope we can contribute whatever way we can to help other businesses and likeminded individuals." **WHL**

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West Hartford's newest food truck, Iron & Grain Co.

We asked Chef Belward some questions for more insight on his personality and know-how.

Q: What's your "secret weapon" ingredient?
A: I don't have one specific ingredient, as every dish requires special attention based on its flavor profile, but I think proper seasoning is the most important factor in maximizing a dish's flavor.

Q: What's your least favorite food?
A: My least favorite foods are dishes that are prepared without thought. For example, when you get a salad with unpeeled shrimp; now I have to either peel them all at once or unpeel the shrimp then clean my hands off every time want to take a bite.

Q: What's the one cooking technique that everyone should know how to do?
A: That's easy; everyone should know how to apply heat correctly to their ingredients. You could have one piece of beef or one onion and that's it, but the way you apply heat to get a sear on that beef or caramelize and draw the sugar out of those onions can give you many different flavors in the end.

Q: If you could take any celebrity chef out to dinner, who would it be and where would you take them?
A: Gordon Ramsey, and I would take him to an Iron & Grain event. His passion not only for the food, but the entire establishment is very motivating to keep pushing yourself to be better. Plus he's very blunt and wouldn't hold any punches when critiquing my food.

Q: What's your favorite cookbook?
A: It hasn't been written yet – my own.

Q: If you weren't a chef, what profession would you be?
A: Before becoming a chef, I was a K9 handler in the US Air Force, although I still train dogs part time for people. If I wasn't a chef, I would probably be back handling dogs for some military organization or private company that has a similar mission.

Q: What spice or herb best describes your personality?
A: Salt – [it's] versatile and enhances the flavors of the dishes it's applied to. Everything I look at, whether it's in the kitchen or with my military unit, I think to myself, "How can this be done different or better?"

Q: What's your "go to" staple recipe/dish?
A: I would have to say deviled eggs. Just like pizza or tacos, deviled eggs are a blank canvas. You can do anything with them and they're great for any setting, whether you're making some fancy ones with shrimp and herbs for a family gathering, or as a snack with a beer, filled with bacon and Sriracha.

Q: What do you cook when having guests to your home?
A: It's very important to me to match the dishes, flavors and general style of the meal to the event, whether that be a feast of cured meats, breads and fruits while gathering to watch "Game of Thrones" with friends or just a plain old egg casserole with Mimosas for brunch.

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Conard student Leah Kelly has taken the lead at her school to encourage fellow students to give Meatless Monday a try.

Courtesy photo

Meatless Mondays

Schools try vegetarian lunch options one day a week

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

The tray filled with small cups of spinach cheese dip disappeared rather quickly as did the Fiesta Bowl samples – a mix of beans, corn and salsa. Students at King Philip Middle School were willing to try something new, and they liked it.

"I think it's really good," said Megan Rodriguez-Hawkins, a vegetarian.

"Sometimes the only thing I can get is a salad and that gets really boring."

A few weeks earlier, a similar scene had played out at Conard High School, where new meatless options were also offered for students to sample.

These foods are part of an initiative begun, in part, by Conard junior Leah Kelly.

Leah is a vegan and after attending two sessions at a Youth Empowered Action Camp she was ready to take action.

Beginning in sixth grade Leah became a vegetarian and eventually a vegan, helping her family to give up meat and become vegan, too. She has since taken this change one step further – into the broader community.

"This year I decided I am going to try to get Meatless Mondays in West Hartford," she said. "It had been something I had heard of; it's now a worldwide movement. What can I do in my community?"

The idea behind the promotion is to give up meat for at least one meal on one day during the week. This helps to keep more animals from being slaughtered, offers health benefits and reduces the environmental impact.

While Leah was beginning to think of what actions she could take to make a change at her school, Trish Molloy, director of food services, was also thinking of adding more meatless options to the

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school menus. Last fall she attended a conference and heard guest speaker Katie Scott, New England food policy coordinator with the Humane Society of the United States, discuss the impact of meatless diets on animals and human health.

Molloy had already introduced a monthly vegetarian meal in the elementary schools and she was hoping to better market this option so it would appeal to older students. She was hoping to get more students interested in trying more vegetable-based meals.

The two women began to work out the logistics, including satisfying all the federal nutritional guidelines.

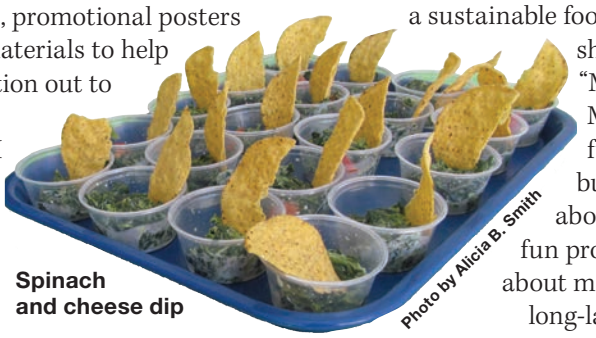
In the meantime, Leah had also reached out to Scott for help. She had talked about it with some of her fellow students and felt she had enough support to try to bring a meatless meal to her school's lunch offerings.

Scott's job is, in part, to reach out to school districts as well as any large institutions that serve meals, such as universities, hospitals, and prisons in order to encourage them to try the meatless options.

"People are becoming more aware of their food – where it is coming from, how it affects their health," Scott said, adding that schools across the country including in Los Angeles and Boston have adopted Meatless Mondays.

Scott provides food directors with recipes, promotional posters and other materials to help get information out to diners.

"When I met Trish it was obvious to me from the beginning she was a forward thinker," Scott said. "At the same time Leah had reached out to me and said, 'Hey, I'm considering this at Conard. What do you think?' It came at the right time. I said, 'Well I am talking to Trish.' These two great ideas came together."



Spinach and cheese dip

Photo by Alicia B. Smith

"This year I decided I am going to try to get Meatless Mondays in West Hartford. It had been something I had heard of; it's now a world-wide movement."

–Leah Kelly

While it might seem like a huge change to swap out a meat-based meal for a vegetable-based one, the more people know about why it is important, the more they are willing to try it, Scott said.

"There really aren't any challenges from the beginning. It's all about education, it's all about having a sustainable food program," she said. "Meatless Monday is fun and great, but it's not about having a fun program. It's about making a long-lasting impact, making people aware Meatless Mondays don't only help animals but it also does a good thing for your body and the environment."

Like she did at King Philip Middle School, Molloy set up sample tables at Conard High in early April, then later at Hall High School, consisting of options that would be served as the main meal for lunch. She also asked students to fill out a survey after they tasted the options.

"The response was very positive at Conard and Hall," Molloy said, adding that some students enjoyed it because it was vegetarian while others thought the option was good for the environment. Still others said they would not stop eating meat but would support Meatless Mondays.

Leah already had some experience in organizing; sophomore year she founded a new club at Conard – CARE, Coalition for Animal Respect and Equality – which she described as a club supporting animal rights. The club has organized fundraisers and worked to spread information on animal abuse issues.

In addition to talking with fellow students, Leah reached out to Growing Great Schools. The local parent organization that works to get more sustainable and local foods into the schools supported her efforts.

Leah also passed out a survey to students and one to parents attending parent-teacher conferences.

"I wanted to get a feel for how much support there would be; it ended up being mostly positive," Leah said.

"I think I've kind of been reaching out to every school administrator or elected official that I thought could potentially be an ally," Leah said.

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Molloy said, "When I think about Meatless Mondays what I like about it is the health aspect."

In many instances, she said, the options will be familiar to students. For example, one meal might be pizza with just vegetable toppings or toasted cheese sandwiches with tomato soup.

At the King Philip sampling, Molloy served Fiesta Bowls, a mix of beans, corn, salsa and Mexican seasoning and a spinach and cheese dip – both with tortilla chips.

"It reminds kids of artichoke dip at restaurants," Molloy said of the spinach selection.

In addition to being more healthful, meatless meals are also a way to help students expand their palettes and introduce them to foods such as dark greens and legumes.

"I feel we are always trying something new to keep the kids interested," Molloy said.

She has had local chefs visit the elementary schools to share recipes and get students excited about food and trying new things, and noted that students that age tend to be more adventurous and willing to try the new foods. West Hartford's diversity exposes students to many cultures, helping to make them more likely to try new foods, she said.

"I don't think it's a very big change from what kids are used to," Leah said. "You still have your pasta, your salads, with just some meat cut out. Most people don't eat meat at every single meal every day anyway. It's not much of a change to adjust to a new diet. At the same time it has far-reaching impact and far-reaching effect."

Molloy said, too, that students have some control over what they eat. For example, they could add cheese to the bean and rice dishes.

"Overall, I'd say the whole movement has been pretty successful," Leah said. "You look at the website for the menus - all the schools in West Hartford have menus that have Meatless Monday listed on them."

Leah said she has been busy helping to get out the word at her school – making posters, making announcements, working to get the support of her teachers and talking to as many people as she can.

For her efforts, Leah received a proclamation from the Town Council in April.

"From now on the main goal is to get the message out there, let as many people as possible in West Hartford know," Leah said. "We want to let people know we are doing this, this is actually happening, it's not just an idea anymore."

WHL

Photo by Alicia B. Smith

Natasha Chicerchia chooses a sample, while Princess Cummings looks over the questionnaire.

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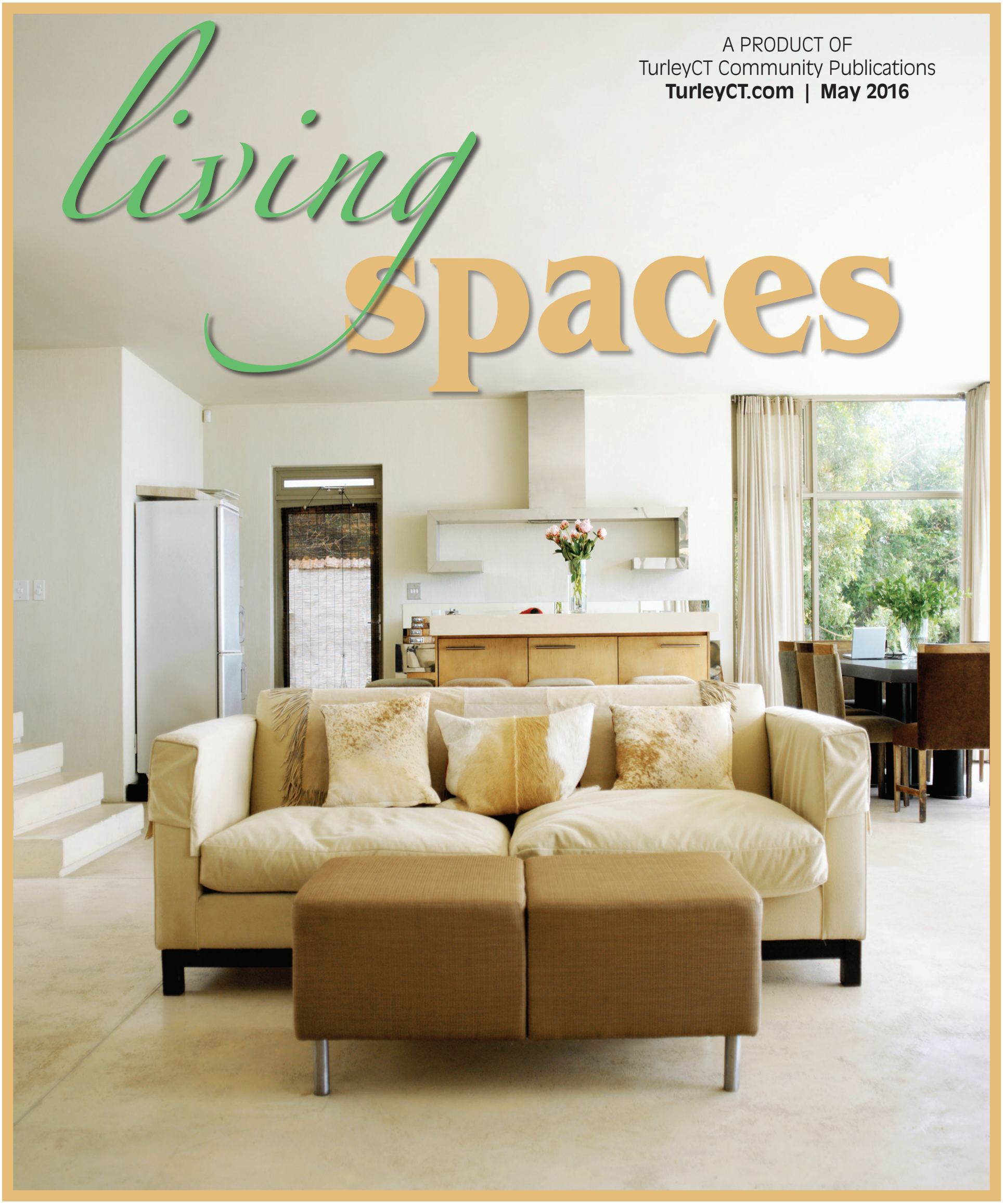

Room to spare

Consider the possibilities if you have an extra room

by Sloan Brewster
Staff Writer

Extra rooms in a home can be transformed into special spaces.

Thomas Mach, owner of In the House and Through the Garden in Simsbury, said he thought converting an empty bedroom into a craft room was a great idea.

"I know many people are doing that," he said.

A crafty space

Having done the same thing with a couple rooms in the store, Mach had some thoughts on how to perfect the space for its new use.

"Start with a paint job so it has a very different look," he said.

Big on environmental matters, Mach suggests going with an eco-friendly paint with a lot of pigment to add an exciting burst of color to the walls.

"Paints with a lot of pigment can give you depth of color," he said." This is an opportunity to have fun in the room so you can have a splash of color."

Once the room has a fresh coat, the next step is adding storage, because, Mach

said, whatever the craft project is, there needs to be plenty of storage.

A common way to achieve that is by using lots of plastic containers, but Mach suggested a more attractive idea, noting it would also be cheaper than buying plastic crates; drop by a thrift store and pick up a vintage sideboard or hutch and upscale it with a bright splash of paint. Some of his customers have gone to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Bloomfield for such pieces.

"You could get an old piece of furniture and paint it and go a lot cheaper than bins," he said.

Making sure the room has quality lighting is the next important step in transforming the space, Mach said.

Then get a nice table to sit down and get to work.

"What's trendy? Old farm tables have become very popular," he said, adding that it's time for more paint. "So, again, you're repurposing."

Repurposing antiques is not only trendy, but easy, he said.

"Nothing harder than pick a color and paint, no sanding no prepping," Mach said. "You just pick a color and paint."

Finally, add a finishing touch to make sure the room breathes inspiration, Mach said. He suggests putting up a bulletin board and affixing to it pictures or fabric swatches or whatever speaks to the crafts to be done in the room.

"Put stuff in that room that inspires you, to always give you ideas for other projects, almost like an idea board or an inspiration board."

Don't forget the important apps. Mach pointed out that Pinterest, Houzz and Instagram were critical to getting going.

"That will always give you fresh ideas and inspiration, plus you can share all your crafts with other people," he said.

With that, the room is ready for creating crafts.

"You've got lighting, you've got the inspiration, you've got the surface, storage," Mach said. "And now you just need some free time to finish what you do."

A fitness space

Since 1998, Frank Bentkowski, director of sales at Ultimate Fitness in Avon, has turned spare rooms into workout rooms.

"The first thing is to look at who in the household will be using the gym

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[and] what kinds of activities they enjoy doing," he said.

An important step before bringing in equipment is installing the right kind of flooring for working out. Bentkowski recommends interlocking rubber tiles.

Then look at the logistics of the room and decide if you want a sound system, a television or both.

"You always want to look at cardio," Bentkowski said of choosing equipment.

The cardio equipment is going to depend on a few different things. First, there's preference. Is the room for someone who likes to walk, bike, run or who does all the above? What is their skill set and do they need something that is easy on their ankles, or will help them with balance?

"You can have the exact replica of the experience in the gym," but that equipment will be costly, Bentkowski said.

Once the desired elliptical, stationary bike or treadmill has been chosen, it's time to consider strengthening equipment.

"For strength, you have to look at how skilled the individual is," he said.

There are different pieces of equipment from multi-stations that enable a person to work on every body part to more specialized units.

"To accompany that, I think it would be great to have a set of dumbbells," Bentkowski said.

Set them on a four-foot rack and get an adjustable bench to use them. Some people like a pull-up station as well, but they're not for everybody.

Finally, there needs to be an area for doing core work with a tri-fold mat or a yoga mat, and possibly some kettle balls.

A fun place for escape

Linda Black of Linda P. Black Interiors in West Hartford thought the best use for a spare room would be an adult game room – "an oasis," as she dubbed the room, a space to escape to at the end of a long day.

For resale purposes, Black said she felt it was important not to change the room's structure or anchor anything to the walls.

The room should be painted in soothing colors and be a luxurious, plush spot in which to relax and "veg out," Black said.

For her, there would be no phone in the room. While there may be a television, it would be hooked up to the laptop, so folks can get away from watching cable and watch shows online.

"Turn the phone off; just try to get to another space," she said. "Try to get away from the rest of the family, maybe try to get away from work."

She envisioned the space would be for a couple, like her own son and daughter-in-law, and would have two huge, oversized chairs.

"My son and his wife, they go home and play games," she said.

There would be a large chest between the chairs where the duo could each have a drink and where they would set their laptops. Both laptops would be connected to the TV so the couple could play games together.

While Black likes a contemporary look, she said she also likes a mix of styles and that the room can even be goofy.

It might also have magazines, newspapers and crossword puzzles on the chest or on the credenza where the television sits. There may also be books on shelves on either side of the credenza.

Stressing the importance of lighting, she said, "I like to have a multitude of different lighting in that room."

Ideas include recessed lighting and a lamp attached to the wall with

Correction

In the Living Spaces section that ran in the April issue, the story "Staging to stay" incorrectly identified renovation photos for a bathroom. The images were the work of Tamatha Wolfel of Infinite Home Design in Wethersfield. The paper regrets the error.

a swing arm.

Hang an oversized picture of a beach or a favorite vacation spot, or someplace cheery or memorable, she said.

"It's nice to have, for instance, a little piece of where you've gone before," Black said. "Anything that cheers, ... brings another frame of mind. ... Some people like maps on the wall to figure where you're going next."

Books in the room can include travel books, and there may be items for folks to enjoy hobbies while they watch television, such as yarn and needles for knitting.

"I'm just thinking about a room where people can think of things other than work," Black said "You're trying to grab snippets of time to be with your loved ones." WHL

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Cooking up kitchen makeovers

See what you can do with $500 and a weekend

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Whether your home is large or small, the kitchen is bound to be the busiest room in the house and will generally show the signs of use more quickly.

We turned to Peter Lemos of DreamMaker Bath and Kitchen in Newington for some suggestions on how to spruce it up – all for less than $500, a few basic skills and a weekend or less of your time.

"The trick is to take your time and avoid using creative shortcuts to finish quickly," he said.

Cabinets typically take up the most space in a kitchen, and their finish becomes worn over time.

"A good paint job can add years of life to them," Lemos said, adding, "Invest in good paint ... either oil-based or latex paint. Latex is easier to apply and clean up, but many argue that oil will give you a sturdier finish and is worth the extra effort. Choose an eggshell or semi-gloss finish. Flat paint will look too dull and high gloss paint will emphasize any imperfections.

He recommends removing the doors and drawer fronts, cleaning all surfaces with a strong cleaner such as TSP, lightly sanding every surface to be painted, then using a tack cloth to remove any dust.

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Whether you paint the cabinets or not, new pulls are a quick and inexpensive upgrade.

Knobs are easiest to replace since there is only one hole; replacing handles requires a bit more effort.

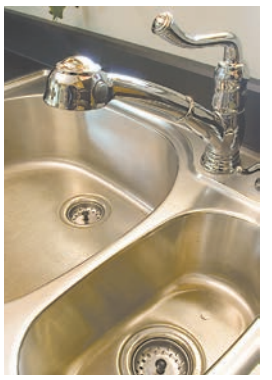
Noting that most kitchens are poorly lit, Lemos said, "You can add loads of style and function for very little investment with a few strategically placed lights to illuminate work areas or dining spaces, or to just add to the general brightness of the kitchen. A new set of track lights, pendant lights or undercabinet lights can be a huge but simple addition to any kitchen."

Choose fixtures that match your décor, he said, noting that an ornate traditional chandelier over a sleek, contemporary island will not look right. Pay special attention to high-use areas like countertops or islands; bright, directed lighting in these locations can minimize accidents.

LED light bulbs use 95 percent less electricity than do incandescent bulbs. While they cost more upfront, they last longer and emit far less heat than other bulbs.

Another way to update the kitchen is to install a new tile backsplash.

"For a few dollars per square foot and an afternoon of work, you can turn that dull space between your counters and upper cabinets into a virtuosic display of artistry," Lemos said. "Gorgeous tiles in every color and texture imaginable are easily available and can be installed by most amateurs. You can find a good selection along with materials like adhesive and grout at your local home center. You will need to buy both field tiles and border tiles."



Lemos advises ordering at least 20 percent more than the square footage being covered to allow for fitting and waste. For a professional look, rent a wet saw to cut the tiles.

If you invest in these projects, "the payoff in style, function and economy will be priceless," Lemos said. WHL

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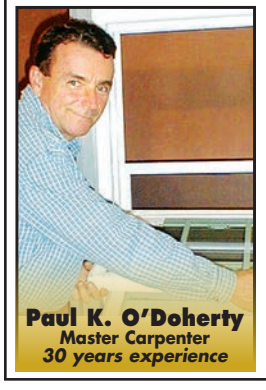

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Behind closed doors

Visit the 1910 home built by the architect who designed the original Sage Allen Department Store for the man who founded Spencer Turbine Company

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Brian and Meghan Rich are the ninth owners of the three-story Georgian Revival style frame house at 98 Mountain Road, West Hartford.

The first was Ira Hobart Spencer, the founder of Spencer Turbine Company, who invented a water-powered hydraulic engine to pump air to operate church organs and the Turbine Vacuum Cleaner.

Architect Isaac Allen Jr. designed the house with front and back porches adorned with Doric columns, high-hipped dormers and a slate roof in 1910. Its foundation and exterior chimney are made of cobblestone. Allen also designed the original Sage Allen Department Store in Hartford.

In 1929, a two-story flat-roofed wing was added.

Despite its 17 rooms and 6,300 square feet, the house is friendly and inviting while open and airy.

The Riches have three young children, so while they've restored much of the house's interior, they have not yet reclaimed the ballroom, instead, turning the space with windows on three sides into a playroom. The previous owners had also used the ballroom as a children's game room.

In the 1940s and '50s, that ballroom was said to have held some fabulous parties, thanks to the home's second owner – jazz band leader, tenor saxophonist and singer Tony Pastor. Frank Sinatra, Lana Turner and Nat King Cole were among his guests.

One of the rumors associated with the house's history, contained in a booklet put together in 1995 and passed from owner to owner, is that during Prohibition there was a speakeasy under the front porch where wooden shelves and broken bottles were later found.

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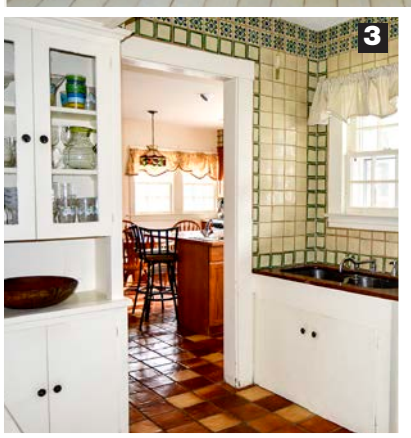

1. The sunroom just off the dining room is perfect for a morning cup of coffee and is used year-round.

2. Architect Isaac Allen Jr. – who designed the original Sage Allen Department Store on Main Street in Hartford – designed this three-story Georgian Revival style frame house at 98 Mountain Road (then known as West Street) for Ira Spencer, founder of Spencer Turbine Company.

3. The butler's pantry, wedged between the kitchen and the dining room, is one of Meghan Rich's favorite rooms. While others have suggested it be eliminated to enlarge the kitchen, she said, "We really like old houses. We could never get rid of the pantry."

4. A chandelier hangs above the dining room table.

5. Two leather chairs on either side of the fireplace make for cozy seating, especially in the winter.

The second floor has three bedrooms plus a master bedroom suite, while four more on the third floor were for servants. Also on the third floor is a billiard room.

To date, they have removed wallpaper and carpeting, and restored the trim that had been painted green.

To complete all the renovations would be "a lifetime project," Meghan Rich said. **VL**

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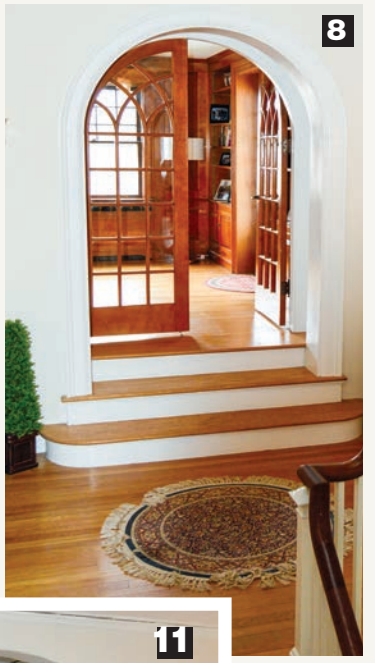
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10

11

6. A fountain adds interest to the front lawn. **7.** A rocking chair in one of the house's eight bedrooms looks out to the north, just over the house's 1928 addition containing the ballroom and master bedroom. **8.** The home's sanctuary is the second-floor library featuring original gum wood paneling, finely detailed wood stenciling and a small paneled room, believed to have been built by the Rev. George Guinness when he married Catherine Mons Spencer after Ira Spencer passed away in 1928 at the age of 43. **9.** These stairs lead to the home's third floor where there are four more bedrooms, a full bath and a billiard room. **10.** This area runs parallel to the kitchen and leads to the back stairway, as well as the main bathroom on the first floor. **11.** The home's second floor landing was carpeted, wallpapered and featured green trim before the Riches restored it. This level contains four bedrooms, two bathrooms and the library.

If you have a home you'd be willing to have featured in upcoming issues, please send a few photos to lwoike@turleyct.com.

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"This is for someone looking for a gift to give, someone who just wants a new piece of home décor, someone looking to do DIY projects or home renovations; there's something for everyone."

– Laurel Janow Larco

by Abigail Albair
Executive Editor

A block party will take over three properties off New Park Avenue in May and bring with it "something for the dreamer, designer and decorator in everyone," organizers said.

The Home, Garden & Lifestyle Show will be held Saturday, May 14 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., hosted by the West Hartford Home Design District, the Shops @ 485 New Park and 20 Jefferson Avenue inside and on the grounds of the latter two properties and inside and on the grounds of Home Design District member Raymour & Flanigan.

More than 60 local businesses, including interior and exterior designers, artisans and crafters will take part, many offering free workshops and demonstrations led by industry experts on the year's latest trends, according to a press release.

Food trucks will also be on site.

"It really will have a block party feel to it," explained Laurel Janow Larco, manager of Custom Framing Depot, located in The Shops @ 485 New Park.

Janow Larco has been organizing home shows at The Shops for the last several years, but said the businesses at 20 Jefferson Ave. and in the Home Design District had expressed an interest in a spring block party, which launched the collaborative effort.

"It's similar to what we've done before, just on a larger scale," Janow Larco said. "This one is more directed to home remodeling than our previous ones have been because there are so many different businesses involved."

The overall feeling will be an eclectic one due to the variety of vendors and businesses.

Details on business participants, vendors and workshops follow in West Hartford LIFE's guide to this show.

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Featured workshops

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cloverNINE green building
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RePurposing & RePlanting
Blaze & Bloom Vintage
10:30 a.m. B

Creating Curb Appeal
Bartlett Brainard Products
11 a.m. C

Refreshing Your Much Loved Art Work
Custom Framing Depot
11:30 a.m. B

Designing with the Latest Trends in Tile
Tile America
12 p.m. C

Get the Latest Looks for Less
Joe Cornfield's Wallpaper & Window Treatments
12:30 p.m. B

Waterproofing
Dalene Carpet One
1 p.m. C

How to Pack Your Breakables Properly
Daley Moving & Storage
1:30 p.m. C

Drapery 101- Styles & Trends
Budget Blinds
2 p.m. C

Latest Trends in Kitchen Design
Holland Kitchens and Baths
2:30 p.m. C

Cupcake decorating
Classic Cakes
ongoing A

Massage
Therapeutic Bodyworks
ongoing A

Cycle, barre and yoga
LIFER Fitness Studio
ongoing A

Tree Planting and Care
Trout Brook Landscaping
ongoing C

Home, *Garden*

Home Design District businesses can help with sleek design and creative architecture.

Photo from the Home Design District Facebook page

"This is for someone looking for a gift to give, someone who just wants a new piece of art or home décor, someone looking to do DIY projects or home renovations; there's something for everyone."

The Home Design District, in its 10th anniversary year, is comprised of 16 businesses located within one mile that all offer products and services to help customers build, renovate, decorate, repair or furnish a home.

The Shops @ 485 New Park offers boutique shops offering art, clothing, picture framing, hand crafts, wall coverings, home accessories, gifts, vintage items, furniture and even photography studios and a bakery/café.

At 20 Jefferson Ave., customers find lifestyle services including specialty cakes, exercise, massage, floral arrangements and dog boarding and daycare.

"I think because it's a collaborative effort with so many different businesses with different backgrounds, we're going to get a different clientele walking through than we normally would," Janow Larco said. "We're hoping for a broader appeal."

The Home, Garden & Lifestyle show will support the local arts by donating apportion of proceeds to Playhouse on Park. Trout Brook Landscaping will give away trees as part of the Connecticut Canopies Tree Replanting Campaign and is collecting donations of pet food to benefit Aid-A-Pet.

Admission and parking for the show is free. For more and updated information, visit www.485NewPark.com and www.HomeDesignDistrict.com.

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& Lifestyle SHOW

A reader's guide to the home show

Building A *20 Jefferson Ave.:*

Classic Cakes
Therapeutic Bodyworks
LIFER Fitness Studio
A Special Place Floral Design Studio
Planet Bark

Building B *485 New Park:*

Custom Framing Depot
Joe Cornfield's Wallpaper & Window Treatments
Blaze & Bloom Vintage
A Little Something Bakery
Panache on New Park
J&M Image Works
Hello Dahle
Whamsco Kitchens & Baths
Finestra Rossa Windows
Stella Blue Photography
Rowanberry & Lavender Photography
Love+Lash

Building C

Raymour & Flanigan:

Budget Blinds (outside)
Tile America (inside)
Surfaces in Stone (inside)
Raymour & Flanigan (inside)
Bartlett Brainard Products (outside)
Daley Moving and Storage (outside)
Dalene Carpet One (outside)
Coastal Tool (outside)
Trout Brook Landscaping (outside)
cloverNINE green building (outside)
Holland Kitchens and Bath (outside)
Barrieau Oil (outside)
The Ultimate Bath Store/The Granite Group (outside)
Marketing Solutions (inside)
The Home Design District (inside)

Vendors on site of Building B:

(outside)
Grassillini Creations
Stock the Bar Candles
Twines & Vines
SuperLula
Creative Fusion
Bolga Baskets
Baker's Dozen Dog Treats
Inspiration & Creation Studio
Nicki's Necklaces

(inside)
The Glass Jar Natural Skincare
CMQ Photography
Here is Good Designs
The West Hartford Guide
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**More to come*

The Home Design District is welcoming the following prospective members to Building C

Butler Equipment (outside)
West Hartford Stone & Mulch (outside)
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Professional tool demonstrations will take place in the Building C parking lot with companies like Milwaukee Tool, Bosch, Festool, Kreg, Fein and more.

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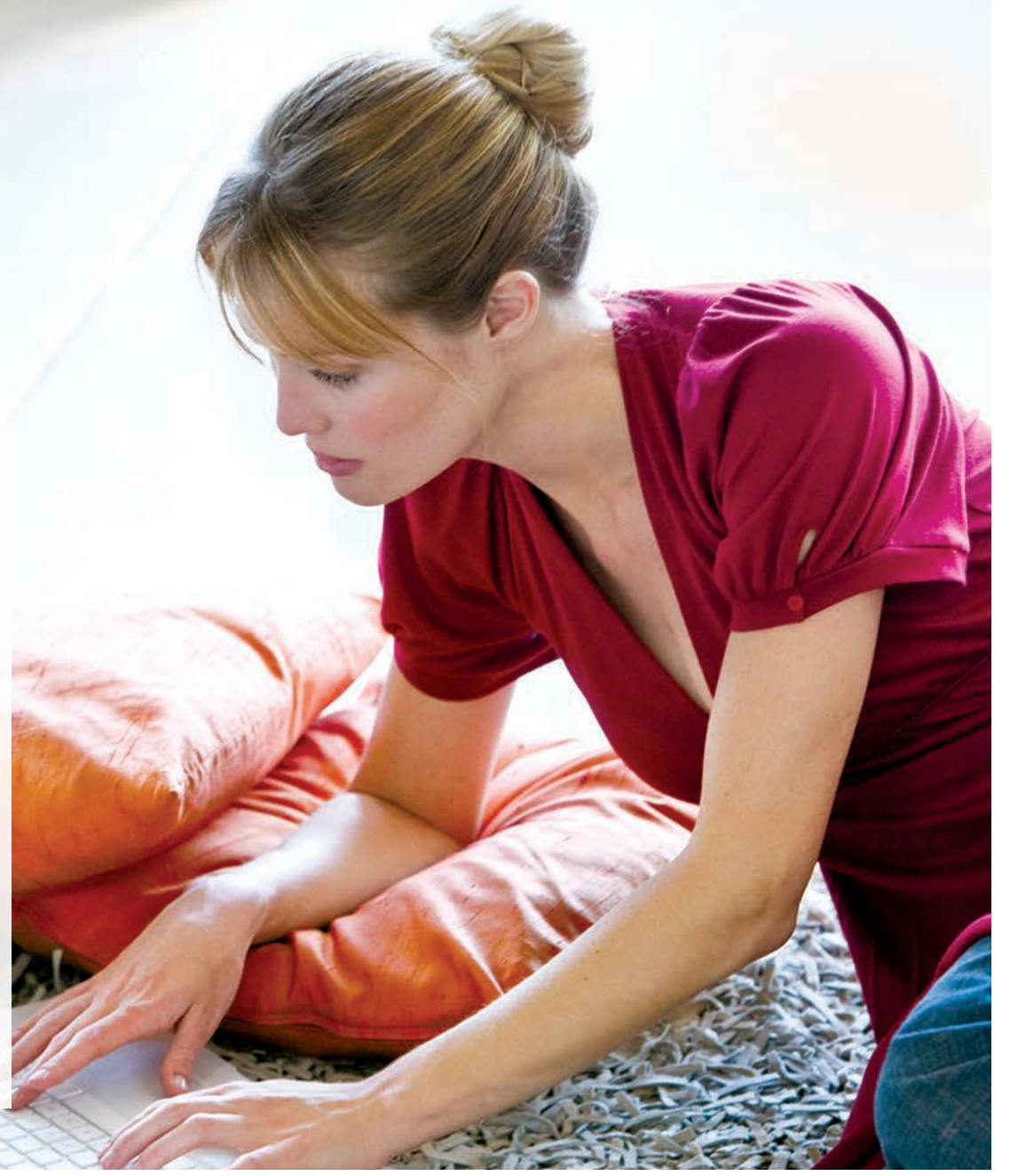
Advice, thoughts and help for do-it-yourselfers

Businesses offer classes and blogs for great design at home

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer



Local experts share their decorating know-how through blogs and hands-on workshops. Here is what a few had to say as to how they inspire those wanting to try their hand at decorating themselves.

Vivid Hue Home

Walking into Vivid Hue Home is like walking into a kaleidoscope of color, an abundance of decorative home goods in blues, pinks greens and yellows.

At one time there was no brick and mortar place to shop, or actual store to shop in, rather, owner Heather Grahling sat at her computer writing a blog about decorating trends.

"Over time, readers expressed interest in the projects I was doing in my own home, so many of my posts became more personal," Grahling said. "I love pushing the boundaries with colors and patterns, and I think that my followers love to see how far I will go."

Some of those design ideas include wallpapering ceilings in her own home.

"I have always been passionate about decorating, and the blog was a terrific outlet in which to become a part of that world," Grahling said.

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In 2015, Grahling opened her shop in Farmington, bringing her ideas and the trends she wrote about out of the blogosphere and into living rooms.

Grahling did not give up her blog, however, as it continues to be a part of her shop's website.

"With the brick and mortar shop now open, I often use the blog as a way to convey the fun items that we are currently carrying in the shop," she said, adding that she also continues to write about do-it-yourself projects, showcasing local artists and designers and anything else that she feels "will be interesting to my readers and customers."

Through her blog, Grahling recently shared a personal story about her daughter's health and about her trip to the New York Now 2016 show, a post that included plenty of photos.

It is not just her blog that interests about 15,000 would-be decorators, but she has 11,000 followers on Facebook and 5,500 on Instagram.

"I utilize all aspects of social media to reach my readers," she said. "For example, even though I don't have an ecommerce website, I post most of the products from my shop on Instagram and Facebook. It gives my followers an idea of what we currently have, and I have even started shipping to all over the U.S. just based upon what viewers want from my Instagram feed."

Additionally, readers of her blog have asked her questions, and she has come to realize how deep this interaction can be for her followers.

"The blog makes a personal connection with the followers," Grahling said.

Vivid Hue Home is located at 775 Farmington Ave., or find the shop and Grahling's blog at vividhuehome.com. Follow her on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

In The House & Through The Garden

There is no reason to feel intimidated when taking a class at Simsbury's In The House & Through The Garden. They offer several classes and will walk a hopeful do-it-yourselfer through each and every step.

Thomas Mach opened his shop in the summer of 2015, and, right away, customers were intrigued with the Annie Sloan chalk painted items he had for sale. So much so that he stocks this special project paint and offers classes weekly.

The most popular class is "Annie Sloan 101" in which Mach said, "You learn all of Annie's different painting techniques and how to do modern or the rusty, chippy looks, two-color distressing," he said. The class also allows participants to learn how to mix colors.

"It's really the fundamental class, it's really hands-on," Mach said.

Participants paint their own board in order to get a feel for the paint and the finish they like. There is also an assortment of beer, wine, coffee, tea and appetizers to enjoy.

For those who do not already know, Annie Sloan is a British artist who developed her own paint specifically for refinishing furniture. The product is nontoxic, odorless and dries very quickly. The artist calls it chalk paint, even though there is no chalk in the product, but it does have a velvety finish. The paint is great for newbies because it does not require preparing a piece of furniture ahead of time and there is no priming or stripping necessary.

"Its not normal paint," Mach said. "It's not at all what you are used to using."

For those looking to move beyond the fundamentals, the shop's offerings continue with "I'm Having a Bad Chair Day," for those interested in painting fabric, which the Annie Sloan paint can also be used. There are also workshops for mirrors or picture frames for those who want to update something they already own.

Mach said, too, that he also does what he refers to as "Girls Night Out Evenings," in which a group of

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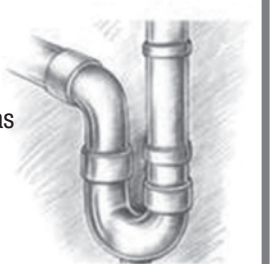

friends will come in to learn, sometimes for a bachelorette party or just to have fun with friends.

Other classes are for specific furniture refinishing projects, such as when participants bring in a coffee table or side table they own or found in a second hand shop and want to update.

"It's all about the workshops," Mach said.

The shop has 17 such events planned between April and June. Look for more information on its website www.inthehouseandthroughthegarden.com or visit it at 10 Jim Gallagher Way, Simsbury.

Cindarella's Attic

Cinda Fiamma of Cindarella's Attic in Wethersfield has been refinishing furniture for more than 30 years.

"I love it, it relaxes you so much," she said.

That might be easy for her to say since she has decades of experience, but Fiamma assures those who have never tried it that they can also find success.

She has been offering refinishing classes for three years at her shop at 59 Wells Road.

"When you leave my classes, you will know the four basic steps and a technique," she said.

The steps include cleaning the piece of furniture to be refinished, painting it with one or two coats with a chalk mineral-based paint, smoothing it down, and the final step, putting on a topcoat to seal it.

Her basic class starts off small. Fiamma gets kitchen cabinet doors from a company in Minnesota that typically have a small flaw in them so the company will not sell them. She uses the doors to teach her refinishing techniques, and participants leave with a freshly painted tray that they did.

Her other classes are the kind in which participants bring in their own piece of furniture, a class she typically restricts to two people. This enables them to work on the piece, leave for lunch to give the paint time to cure, and come back to finish it later in the day.

"They just love it," Fiamma said, sharing the story about one customer who came in never having painted anything in her life, and she liked it so much she went home and refinished her entire bedroom set.

Fiamma said that for those who feel they might not have the artistic flair to try this, they, too, will like the finished piece. She will be there to walk them through each step.

For one thing, if it does not come out well, the American Paint Company paint she uses wipes off very easily.

"It's just a thing," she said. "You can't make a mistake."

These days, more clients are preferring to finish their piece with a distressed look, although she can teach them how to make a piece look modern or rustic or any number of other styles.

She also offers the Chippy Class, a technique that when done allows you to see layers of paint.

"Whatever they want to know, I have so many tricks I can show people, Fiamma said.

Cindarella's Attic is located at 59 Wells Road, Wethersfield. For more information visit cinda-rella-sattic.com or call 860-563-0351. VL

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Chair

Looking to add a bit of mid-century glam to your home? Check out the stylistic chair, which comes in a pair, at Three Ladies Antiques. There are choices galore at the shop from Persian and Oriental rugs and furniture to paintings and collectibles. Three Ladies Antiques is located at 328 Park Road and is open Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 860-231-1678 for more information. **WHL**

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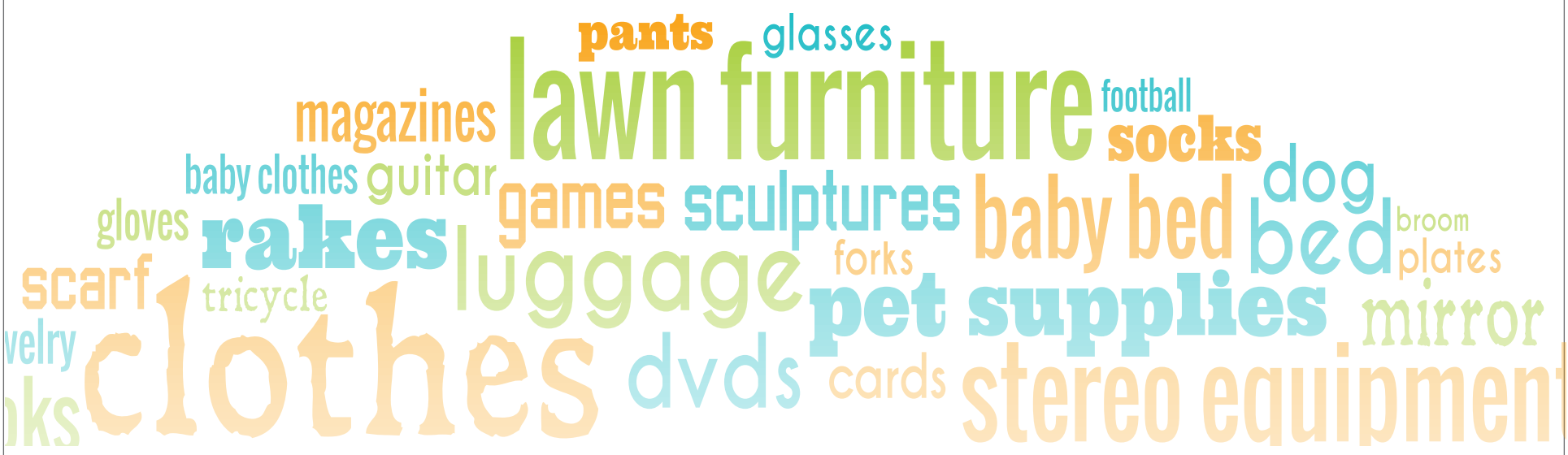

Out of Sight

How and where to get rid of what you no longer want or need

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Once spring cleaning is done, there will be a collection of items that are no longer wanted. Three things can be done with them: toss, sell or donate.

Items that are broken, stained or worn out should be thrown away. Be sure to check which items can be recycled and which ones will need a bulky waste pickup.

Some items will be good enough to sell.

Ralph Labozzo, appraiser and auctioneer at Golden Gavel, said the business services customers who want a few items appraised and those who want the entire contents of a house dealt with and the premises swept clean.

Right now, he said, vintage comic books from the late 1950s and early 1960s are hot sellers – those with a cover price of 10¢, 12¢ or 15¢. Super heroes from the Golden Age (think Superman) to the Silver Age (think Batman) are all in demand.

In addition to comic books, Labozzo said musical instruments are selling well (think guitars and vintage saxophones). The same is true for Halloween and other holiday -themed ephermera from the early 1900s, and both vintage and contemporary game room items such as pinball and arcade games.

First edition leather bound limited edition books, especially if signed, along with coffee table books on the arts sell at auction.

There is no fee or obligation to have someone from the auction house come out and assess the items. Pick up would be scheduled for another time.

Items can also be sold online. Craigslist is especially good for large items that are difficult to pack and ship. It also saves you the service fee charged by eBay and Amazon.

Many clothing, accessories, jewelry and decorative items can be taken to a consignment shop provided they are in excellent condition. Items are priced with consideration given to condition, quality, brand, age, original purchase price, style and buyer demand. Consigners generally get between 40 percent and 55 percent of the sale price. A store's website will provide lists of items accepted – and those that are not – along with terms and conditions.

Some consignment shops deal specifically with furniture and other home accessories.

Sheri Jackson, longtime owner of Gillette Furniture Consignment in Wethersfield, said, "We love when people spring clean because we are

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often times the right fit for their lovely furniture and home décor."

Pub tables, sofas and desks are always in demand, along with console, coffee and end tables, and dining and bedroom sets, she said.

When working with large pieces of furniture, it's a common practice to begin with customers emailing photos of the items they would like to consign.

"We want to see what it is," Jackson said.

Style, condition and quality are all taken into account.

"We like to find the next happy home for their piece," she said.

Holding a tag sale is another way to get rid of just about anything. Try recruiting others in the area to join you – neighborhood sales attract more shoppers.

Most items in good condition can be donated, and most donations will be tax deductible. In addition to well-known organizations such as Goodwill and Savers, here are some places you can bring items.

Electronics

Your town's transfer station

Every town is required to establish a convenient location for recycling residential electronics such as computers, printers and televisions. For specifics, contact your town. Information is also listed on the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's website at ct.gov/deep.

Green Monster
260 Brook Street
West Hartford
860-897-1426
greenmonsterecycling.com
Just about anything with a cord or that operated on batteries can be brought to this recycling center for free. Hard drives are destroyed and nothing ends up in a landfill. The only items not accepted are washers, dryers, microwaves, vacuums, and appliances with refrigerant such as refrigerators, dehumidifiers, air conditioners and water coolers.

Furniture

A Hand Up Inc.
860-424-2980
ahandupinc.org
This organization based in West Hartford helps people transition from the streets into homes. Items must be new or gently used, modestly sized, basic and practical. Its current wish list includes twin and full bed frames, small sofas and love seats, small armchairs and recliners, dressers, nightstands, bookcases, end and coffee tables, television stands, lamps, kitchen tables and chairs. Pickups can be scheduled. Arrangements must also be made for dropping items off at the warehouse on Talcott Road in West Hartford. For more details, see ahandupinc.org/wish-list/.

Habitat for Humanity ReStore
500 Cottage Grove Road
Bloomfield
860-519-0828
hartfordhabitat.org/restore
This home improvement and donation center sells new and gently used furniture, home accessories and appliances. Pickups can be arranged.

Building materials

Photo courtesy of The ReCONNstruction Center

The ReCONNstruction Center
731 New Britain Ave.
Newington
860-597-3390
reconnstruction center.org
This charitable organization accepts good quality, new, preowned, antique, surplus and reusable building materials, lighting fixtures, appliances, kitchen cabinets, plumbing fixtures, doors, paint, wood stoves, commercial shelving, tools, architectural salvage, and replacement and original vinyl windows. Pickups can be arranged at no charge.

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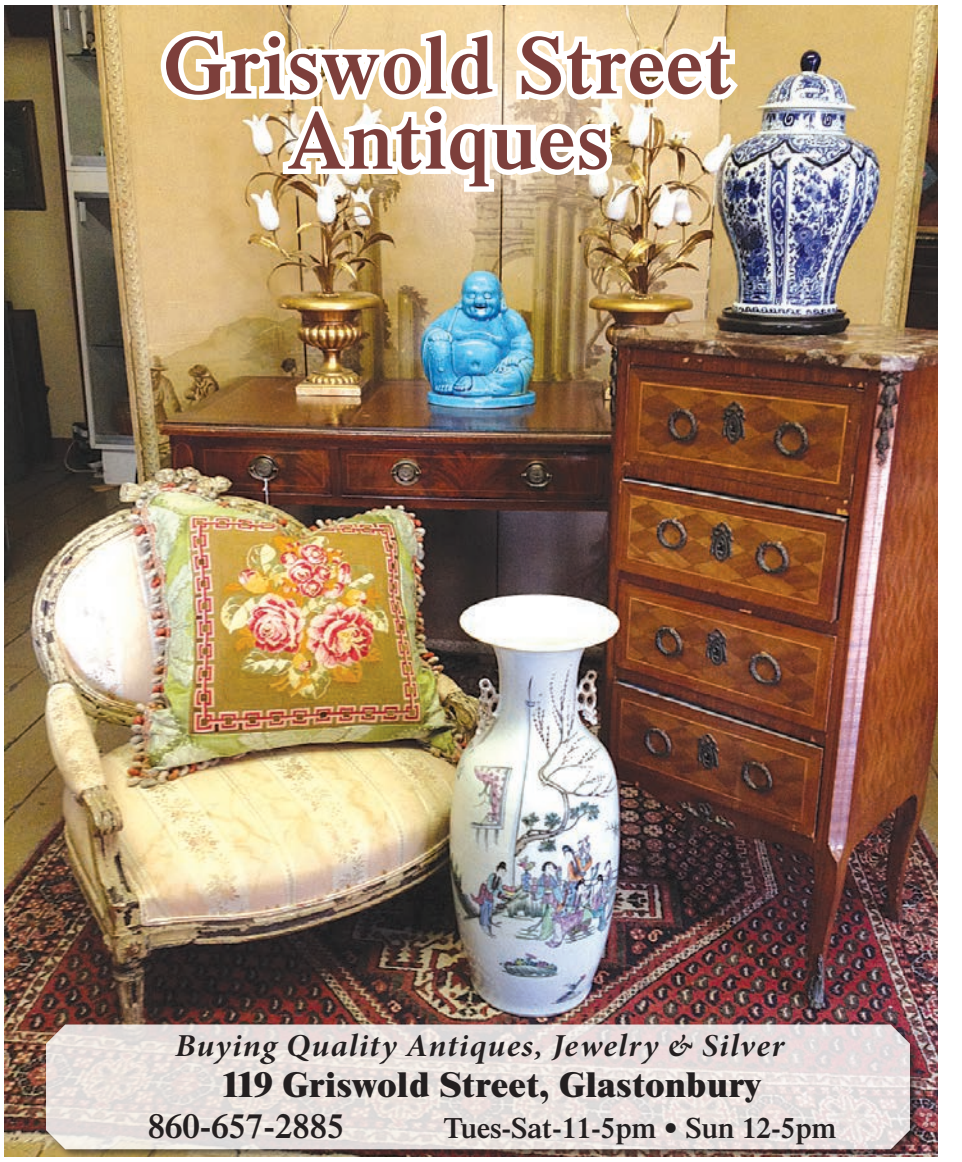

LIVING Spaces

Habitat for Humanity ReStore
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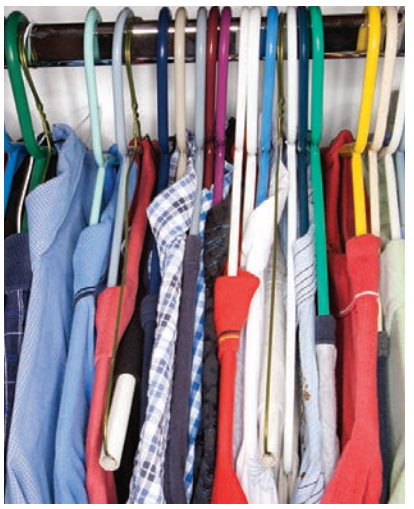
This center accepts building materials including cabinets, countertops, electical hardware, roofing materials, paint, wallcovering, tile, floor coverings, doors, windows, plumbing materials, cinderblocks and bricks. For donation pickups, email photos of items to barbara@hartfordhabitat.org, along with your name, address and phone number.



Clothing

The Clothes Horse
175 Park Road
West Hartford
860-233-1411
This thrift shop operated by the Junior League of Hartford accepts current fashions and accessories for women, men and teens, including outerwear, tuxedos and gowns, and vintage clothing and accessories. Everything must be clean and free of rips, stains and fading.

University of Connecticut Health Center Auxiliary Thrift Shop
270 Park Road
West Hartford
860-586-8047
Run by volunteers, this shop accepts high-quality used clothing and shoes for men and women, jewelry and handbags. Unsold or unwanted clothing is donated to other organizations that assist those in need.

Market Square Thrift Shop
230 Market Square, Rear
Newington
860-667-7174
This shop, benefiting the Church of Christ Congregational, accepts men's, women's and children's clothing, jewelry and accessories.

Favarh Thrift Shop
250 Albany Turnpike
Canton
860-693-2899
favarh.org
The shop accepts men's and women's clothing, shoes and accessories. Donations can also be left at Favarh's main office at 225 Commerce Drive in Canton.

Second Chance Shop
730 Hebron Avenue
Glastonbury
860-633-5188
and
12 Station Street
Simsbury
860-658-7152
Items that can be donated include clothing for infants, children, men and women, along with accessories such as purses, hats, ties, scarves and jewelry. Run by auxiliary volunteers proceeds, from these shops benefit the programs and services of The Village for Families and Children.

Housewares

The gift shop at your local senior center

The swap shack at your town's transfer station

Favarh Thrift Shop
250 Albany Turnpike
Canton
860-693-2899
favarh.org
The shop accepts housewares and giftware. Donations may also be left at Favarh's main office at 225 Commerce Drive in Canton.

A Hand Up Inc.
860-424-2980
ahandupinc.org
Items being accepted are pots, pans, dishes, glassware, coffee makers, microwaves, silverware, bakeware, mixing bowls, storage canisters, cooking utensils and small appliances. No formal china, stemware or high-end appliances. Clean and gently used sheets, blankets, comforters, mattress covers, towels, pot holders, bath mats, shower curtains, and small rugs may also be donated. Pickups and dropoffs need to be scheduled.

Market Square Thrift Shop
230 Market Square, Rear
Newington
860-667-7174
This thrift shop benefiting the Church of Christ Congregational, accepts small household appliances, dishes and glassware, home goods, gift items, toys and games.

The Clothes Horse
175 Park Road
West Hartford
860-233-1411
Among the items accepted are artwork, pottery, paintings, prints, housewares, books, decorations, unopened gifts and holiday items.

Second Chance Shop
730 Hebron Avenue
Glastonbury
860-633-5188
and
12 Station Street
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860-658-7152
The shops accept household items such as china, glasses, linens, antiques and collectibles. No furniture, beds, cribs, strollers, car seats, exercise equipment or appliances can be donated. Run by auxiliary

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Books

Your library's used book sale

On the Road Bookshop
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ontheroad-bookshop.com

This store buys books in most subject areas, including art, Eastern and Western philosophy, literature, scholarly books, very old books, leather sets and some recent textbooks. No romance novels, Reader's Digest books or book club editions are accepted. Book-related items such as bookends, bookstands, prints and ephemera are also purchased. If you have too many to bring in, someone will come to you. The owner urges people to call before throwing out anything. Store credit is also offered.

Bicycles

Simsbury Free Bike
828 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury
860-841-2611
simsbury.bike

This free multi-town bike share program accepts bikes that are in good condition (no rust, no repairs needed). Bikes left at The Bicycle Cellar at 532 Hopmeadow Street will be brought to Simsbury Free Bike.

Household hazardous waste

Special collections are held for household hazardous waste that is generally defined as toxic, flammable, reactive or corrosive materials. These include oil-based paints, thinners, pool chemicals, pesticides, mercury fever thermometers and gasoline.

April 30, Farmington Farmington High School, 10 Monteith Drive, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Simsbury, Avon and Canton residents.)

May 7, Newington, Town Garage, 281 Milk Lane, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Rocky Hill, West Hartford and Wethersfield residents.)

June 12, West Hartford, Emanuel Synagogue, 160 Mohegan Drive, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield residents.)

June 18, Simsbury, Public Works Facility, 66 Town Forest Road, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Farmington, Avon and Canton residents.)

June 25, Wethersfield, Webb School, 51 Willow Street, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, Rocky Hill and West Hartford residents.)

July 9, Rocky Hill, Stevens School, 322 Orchard Street, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, West Hartford and Wethersfield residents.)

September 24, West Hartford, Public Works Garage, Oakwood Avenue, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield residents.) **WHL**

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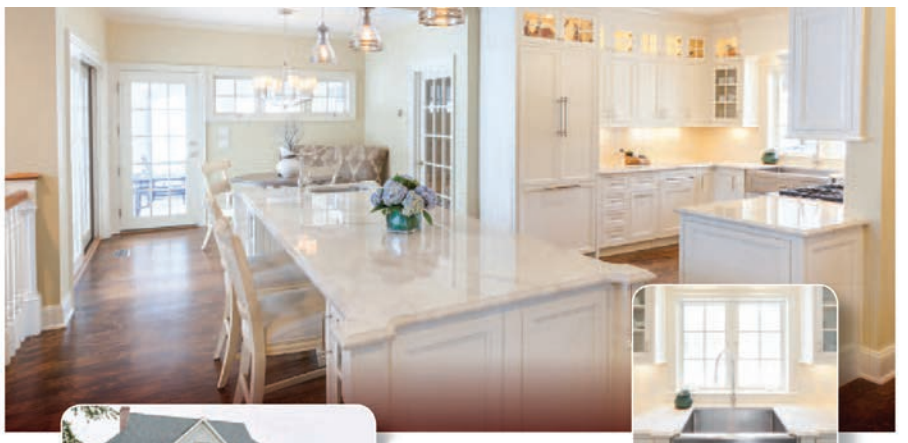

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44 things to know about U.S. 44

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Thousands of cars travel U.S. Route 44 daily to get from one place to another, passing dozens of landmarks and historic sites without being aware of them. LIFE explored the stretch of the highway from the Hartford town line to the New Hartford town line to bring you these highlights.

1. U.S. Route 44 is an east–west highway that runs for 237 miles: 160 in Connecticut, 66 in New York, 38 in Massachusetts and 26 in Rhode Island. In Connecticut, Route 44 runs from Salisbury to Putnam.

2. Most of the alignment of modern U.S. 44 in Connecticut was, at one time, part of an early network of turnpikes during the 19th century.

3. Much of U.S. 44 in Connecticut is known as the Jonathan Trumbull Highway. From New Hartford to the West Hartford-Hartford line was known as the Talcott Mountain Turnpike.

4. In 1922, the New England states designated route numbers on its main roads. Parts of the current U.S. 44 were known as Route 101, Route 109, Route 121, New England Route 3 and New England Route 17.

5. The Elisha Wadsworth House was built in 1828 as a tavern. Located on the corner of Albany Avenue and Prospect Street, it was the first home in Hartford's West End. Originally it faced north, but in the early 1900s it was turned to face west and converted into a residence, undergoing the removal of a front veranda and an ell, an addition and the installation of modern plumbing. Listed for $1.49 million in 2013, the 5,000-square-foot house sold in 2014 for $550,000.

West Hartford

6. At one time, a portion of the course at Hartford Golf Club was on the south side of Albany Avenue, so golfers had to cross the street about where Bainton Road is today.

7. Saint Mary Home at 2012 Albany Avenue is part of the Mercy Community. It began as a farmhouse in the fields of the Terry Farm in 1880 where the Sisters of Mercy established a home for the disenfranchised. It is now a skilled nursing facility and faith-based residence, serving more than 700 older adults, many of whom represent the underserved poor in Greater Hartford.

8. Aaron Goodman's tavern was on the Old Albany Stagecoach Road, later called the Talcott Mountain Turnpike, in the vicinity of where Panera Bread and the Shell gas station are today. In 1820, it became the town's first post office.

9. Established in 1891, the blacksmith shop at 2575 Albany Avenue served area farmers and tradesmen. A fire in the 1920s forced the business to move a mile or so east. When property owners planned to sell the West Hartford Ornamental Iron Shop to an orthodontist, the second generation of wrought iron workers bought it and, in 2000, reestablished the blacksmith shop as Wrought Iron Works LLC.

10. A two-story house with a gate that could be raised and lowered was on the north side of the then Talcott Mountain Turnpike just west of Mountain Road.

11. The Junior School was selected from among 18 applicants to rent the 75-acre country estate of Pratt & Whitney founder Frederick Rentschler for $1 a year. The school changed its name to Renbrook, which was what the family called the property. Classes at the day school are held in the charming home some call a French chateau and others call a Tudor revival, featuring a cobblestone courtyard and a sunroom. A wing that contained a ballroom, living quarters, a boudoir, a garden room and more was torn down before World War II, and a new wing was completed later on the same footprint.

12. Old Stone Crossing was developed in 2003 on what was a farm belonging to Morgan Brainard, Aetna's fourth chief executive. He used the farm as his summer home, growing vegetables on the land

Avon

and producing cider and maple syrup for his family. After years of neglect, the barns collapsed and the outbuildings were vandalized. The main house on the farm caught fire in 1991.

13. The MDC's Reservoir 6 is the largest in the public water supply's 3,000 acres spread out over three towns. There are more than 30 miles of paved roads and gravel paths for hiking, biking, jogging, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing. There are also wheelchair-accessible picnic groves. A 3.6-mile trail loops around the water and a paved portion spans 1.4 miles along the eastern side. While a nature lovers paradise offering great views, the property – open sunrise to sunset year round – is not a public park.

14. In 1781, General Jean-Baptiste de Rochambeau's French Army marched from Newport, Rhode Island to Yorktown, Virginia, later returning to Boston. The route was designated a National Historic Trail in 2009. One of his encampments was at Reservoir 6.

15. The 50-mile long Metacomet Trail follows along the western edge of Hartford Reservoir 6 for slightly more than two miles. Find a Connecticut Blue Blazed Trail sign at the northern end of the parking lot. Then, at the northern end of the reservoir, look on the left side of the trail for a blue blazed marker indicating where the Metacomet Trail turns off the reservoir trail.

Photo by John Ramsey

16. WCCC's FM transmitter tower on the north side of Route 44 in Avon is 347 feet tall. Owned by local jeweler Bill Savitt, WCCC-FM first went on the air with a tower at that site in 1959. The station's AM tower moved here from South Quaker Lane in 1990. The original FM tower was replaced in 1990 to allow it to be used for AM as well. In 2000, a second tower was added, allowing WCCC-FM to adopt digital radio technology. In addition to WCCC-FM and WNWW-AM (formally WCCC-AM), the site is utilized by two TV stations, four cellular carriers and numerous other telecommunications companies. The adjacent quarry was the site of the first murder investigated by the West Hartford Police Department in the 1930s.

17. Richard Ely of New York, a merchant in France and England, purchased Deercliff, 250 acres atop Avon Mountain in 1835 to use as a summer residence and a dairy farm where he was among the first breeders of Jersey cattle in the United States. The farm is said to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad. His daughter, Maud Ely, married Lt. Cmdr. John Gibbons in 1906 when he was the Naval Attache to the Court of St. James in England. She inherited the estate in 1932, and gave money to many causes, including the library and the church. A pair of stags that once stood atop stone pillars to the estate are now on either side of the first driveway on Deercliff Road, opposite Ely Pond.

18. In the early 1800s, Daniel Wadsworth, son of Hartford's wealthiest merchant, purchased a 250-acre wilderness tract atop the mountain, which he called Monte Video. A patron of American artists, Wadsworth's collection – which included paintings done of his property – became the basis of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. The estate was a summer retreat with a neoGothic villa, gardens, a 12-acre lake, boathouse, farm, ice house and a viewing tower. Wadsworth welcomed tourists to enjoy the property; both Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were among its visitors. The property was later owned by Robert Hoe, for whom the pond is named, then by Katherine Vidal Smith, stepmother of American writer Gore Vidal. Michael Konover bought it and, in 1991, replaced the original house with a 7,000-square-foot, four-bedroom home in the Arts and Crafts style. The property is currently for sale for $9.9 million and includes three cottages and three horse barns. The photo of the painting above: Thomas Cole, View of Monte Video, the Seat of Daniel Wadsworth, Esq., 1828, Oil on wood, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Bequest of Daniel Wadsworth, 1848.14

19. This monument on Avon Mountain Road, about halfway down on the left when traveling west, honors James Henry MacDonald (1851-1938), the first Connecticut Commissioner of Highways. One of the New Haven native's accomplishments was turning old stagecoach routes into the backbone of the state's highway system. Avon Mountain Road was a trunk line of that system. The 11-foot black polished granite monument was dedicated in 1933. A six-acre park associated with this monument was closed in the 1980s due to loitering and vandalism.

20. The foyer, lobby and some other areas of the newly opened North House Restaurant at the foot of Avon Mountain were part of the house built in 1757 by Nathaniel North on land granted to his grandfather, Thomas North, in the late 1600s for fighting in King Phillip's War. His son, Joseph, became a blacksmith and in 1832 built a stone building next door that is now connected to the main house, which was rebuilt after a fire in 1967. The hearth in its Forge Room is the original and is the oldest continuously operating fireplace in the state.

21. Marshall Tavern was established on the southwest corner of Albany Turnpike and Waterville Road in the 1670s. The inn was an overnight stop for the Hartford–Albany–Boston stagecoach. In addition to accommodations for humans and their horses, there was a ballroom, a tavern and the Nod District Post Office. The building was demolished in 1933 when making safety improvements to that intersection.

Vintage photo from the Anthony O'Neill Collection, Courtesy of Nora Howard

22. On the site of the Living Museum stood Avon's first

All photos by Lynn Woike unless noted or vintage

town hall. Built in 1891, it burned down in 1967.

23. The Giant Rocking Chair, marking an entrance to Avon Village Marketplace, came from a furniture store in Elmwood. It was no longer needed there, so Jerry DiBica, then owner of The Spinning Jenny, brought it to its new location in the early 1960s, not long after Old Avon Village was created by converting four old homes into retail shops.

24. Ye Old Barber Shoppe that sits vacant in Avon Center was the town's first post office. Around 1950, the building was remodeled and Bernard Zumbroski began renting it for his barber shop, working there for 63 years. Among the antiques and vintage items that used to be in his his shop was the first television he and his wife bought in 1949.

25. The O'Neill blacksmith and transportation business began in 1886, in a white barn a few hundred feet away across Route 44, behind the church and the cemetery, doing horseshoeing, jobbing and repairing. John O'Neill continued his father's business, adding a pump to sell Mobil gas in 1912. It became one of the state's first Chevrolet dealerships in 1921. Now O'Neill's Chevrolet-Buick Inc., it is Avon's oldest continuously run business with employees.

26. On the site of the current O'Neill's Chevrolet-Buick Inc. once stood the Tally Ho Tavern and Inn, built by Obadiah Gillet shortly after the Talcott Mountain Turnpike was completed in 1799. It was purchased by Francis Woodford about 1840 when it became the Avon Hotel. Also called the Avon House, it burned in 1946 along with much of the O'Neill block.

27. Avon Congregational Church was built in 1819 by Connecticut architect David Headley. It is on the National Register of Historic Places and on the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places. Town meetings were held here until a town hall was built in 1891. Except for the shutters, it's believed the church looks the same as when it was new.

28. Avon town offices are located in buildings that once belonged to the Climax Fuse Company, which later merged with Ensign-Bickford, headquartered in Simsbury.

29. This tree beside the Avon Town Hall parking lot is a third descendant of the state's Charter Oak – a tree so named because in 1687 it held Connecticut's Royal Charter of 1662, preventing it from being taken by an emissary of King James II. During the 1965 Connecticut State Constitutional Convention, all 169 towns were offered a descendant of the original tree; Avon was one of 84 towns accepting the offer. A small plaque notes the gift. Another notable tree along Route 44 is a pin oak marking the 1902 Connecticut Constitutional Convention; it's located on the south-east corner of Route 44 and Old Farms Road.

30. Change is coming to Avon Center in the form of 314 multi-story residential style apartments and 750,000 square feet of commercial space on 97 acres. The project, approved last year, has an estimated market value of $225 million. For more information, see the Avon Village Center Master Plan at avonct.gov.

Canton

31. Distances along the road were marked by milestones. The first ones were made of sandstone from the quarry in Portland. Although

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none are along the road today, the 16-mile stone – once at the foot of Indian Hill – is on the porch of the Canton Historical Museum.

32. The red barn on the property of The Shoppes at Farmington Valley once belonged to the Higley Dairy Farm. James B. Lowell Sr. bought the property around 1928 and developed the Canton Public Golf Course in 1931, locating the pro shop in the barn.

Vintage photo from the Anthony O'Neill Collection, Courtesy of Nora Howard

33. On the corner of Albany Turnpike and Lawton Road, where CVS pharmacy, and UConn Health Medical Services and Urgent Care are located, once stood the Solomon Everest house. The large Georgian colonial with 12-over-12 double hung windows was built in 1796. In later years it was known as the Mills/Lane house. Dr. Everest (1760-1822), who served as a surgeon in the Revolution, practiced medicine on this site for almost 30 years. He is considered the Father of Canton since his name was first on the petition in 1806 asking the General Assembly to create the Town of Canton. The house was dismantled and removed in 2002.

34. Canton Inn at 144 Albany Turnpike – later known as Black Dog Tavern and Margaritas – was built as a house in 1808 by Joseph Dailey. He, and later his sons, manufactured light carriages known as "chariottees" that were shipped to Southern states.

35. Canton's namesake green is believed to have been laid out soon after completion of the Albany Turnpike in 1764. On its northwest corner once stood one of the nation's largest elm trees. It succumbed to Dutch elm disease in the mid-20th century. The north end of the green

also once grew a grandchild of the Charter Oak, which was planted on Flag Day 1918 and commemorated with a plaque in 1939. The gazebo was designed by Kenneth Bristol, built and recently restored through the generosity of the Lion's Club.

36. The oldest standing church in Canton is at 186 Albany Turnpike. This Baptist church was built on the Canton Green in 1807. In 1838, it was moved to the north side of the road using oxen, then, in 1986, the building was sold and moved back from the road and was used as a commercial building.

37. At 188 Albany Turnpike, Union Savings Bank occupies what was an

inn in stagecoach days. Built in 1784 by Nathaniel Alford, the house has been a Masonic meeting place, a summer home, an antique shop and a kite store. It got its nickname, Elm Shade, because it was shaded by the largest elm tree in the state. A plaque beside the door leading from the parking lot briefly describes its history.

All photos by Lynn Woike unless noted or vintage

38. Gallery on the Green, 5 Canton Green Road, was constructed as a school in 1872 and continued in that capacity until 1949. Afterward, it was owned by the Canton Volunteer Fire Company. In 1960, the Gallery on the Green, operated by the Canton Artists' Guild, opened its doors.

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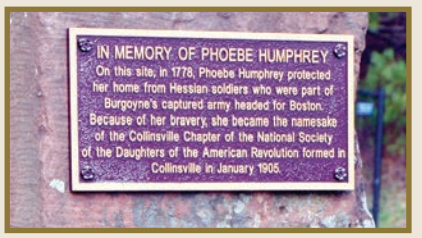
IN MEMORY OF PHOEBE HUMPHREY
On this site, in 1778, Phoebe Humphrey protected her home from Hessian soldiers who were part of Burgoyne's captured army headed for Boston. Because of her bravery, she became the namesake of the Collinsville Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution formed in Collinsville in January 1905.

39. The Phoebe Humphrey House once stood at 277 Albany Turnpike, where the Collinsville Savings Society is located. The simple saltbox with a center chimney was built in 1759. When she was 16 and home alone, two Hessian soldiers surprised Phoebe and demanded the bread she was baking; she drove them off with a hot fireplace poker. The local DAR chapter is named after her and a brownstone post with a plaque on the bank's east side memorializes her.

40. The house on the 600-acre Dyer Farm at 1 Dyer Cemetery Road was built by Samuel Wilcox in 1789. Over the years it had a sawmill; a silver mine that produced small quantities of zinc, lead, copper and beryl; a tannery; a dairy operation and a cider

Canton Historical Society

mill. It was also a stage coach hotel that could accommodate 20 guests and 40 horses. On alternate years in the first half of the 1800s, Zenas Dyer hosted the Canton Agricultural Fair. For most of the 20th century, Margaret Dyer had a roadside business selling her famous salted nuts, fudge and homemade handkerchiefs. The house and an adjacent building were divided into apartments.

41. Matterhorn Mini Golf that opened last year by Canton native Autumn Sutherland had been the site of the Cob Web, a seasonal antique store that hosted a bustling outdoor flea market on the weekends. It was built in 1964 for Dolly Rudder by her husband.

42. The Hessian soldiers were German Regiments hired through their rulers by the British Empire and used in several conflicts. During the American Revolution, they camped in the meadows below Dyer Cemetery.

43. The intersection of routes 44 and 179 was once quiet and known as Harts Corner. On the left of Route 44 headed west is an old paved section were this railroad station once stood.

44. Known for many years as Bidwell's Tavern, this simple Greek revival house was purchased by Anson Bristol, a dairy farmer, in 1886 when it was River Dale Farm. Bristol raised pigs and sheep, grew much of his own food, cured bacon, made butter, cut ice on a nearby pond and grew tobacco. For the last several years, some of the land has been rented to farmers who grow truck crops and maintain a farm stand. The farm is still owned by Anson Bristol's descendants. **WHL**

Sloan Brewster assisted with this article.

Thank you to the 5,300 volunteers who helped change lives for children and families in our community last year.

Clockwise from top left: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), 24th annual United Way *Year of Caring*, United Way Volunteer Budget Coaching, and, United Way Readers Program.

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Photo by Lynn Woike

95 years of service

Junior League of Hartford celebrates its anniversary with volunteer marathon

by Lynn Woike
Editor

All courtesy photos unless noted

Upper left: Julie Krug volunteers at the Clothes Horse Booth at Celebrate West Hartford last year. **Upper right:** The Clothes Horse on Park Road has been generating funds to support the Junior League of Hartford for 65 years. **Bottom left:** Denise Callan, Julie Krug and Cat Butler volunteer at a Red Cross blood drive. **Bottom middle:** Members pack toys for children in the Backpack Program. **Bottom right:** Laura Ficks and Laurie Pope make blankets as part of Project Linus.

To mark 95 years of community service, the Junior League of Hartford Inc. is launching a volunteerathon Mother's Day weekend that will give more than 200 hours.

"What better way to pay homage to our community service roots than by going out into the community and volunteering?" asked league President Julie Krug.

A marathon is 26.2 miles, so the inaugural fundraiser will substitute time for distance and give "woman power" for 26.2 continuous hours. Junior League members will volunteer in shifts at nonprofits and community partners throughout Greater Hartford starting May 6 at 4 p.m. and running through 6:12 p.m. Sunday, May 7.

The event will promote the league, gain support throughout the community and raise money for the league's programs and projects through the sponsorships gotten by volunteers doing shifts. The goal is to raise $30,000 – none of which will be used for operating costs.

Among the agencies that will benefit are the New Children's Museum, the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Bloomfield, Riverfront Recapture Inc., Junior Achievement of Southwest New England, Camp Courant and Gifts of Love.

The event will culminate with a finish line party at Real Art Ways.

"Because we're a woman's organization and we love to promote the accomplishments of women, what better way than on Mother's Day weekend," Krug said.

The West Hartford resident began as a volunteer about 10 years ago, explaining, "I always said I'd volunteer, I just couldn't get it together." Calling the Junior League "a well-oiled machine," Krug praised the many options from which members can choose. Not only are there a variety of causes and activities, but the level of involvement can range from running an event or signing up for just a shift.

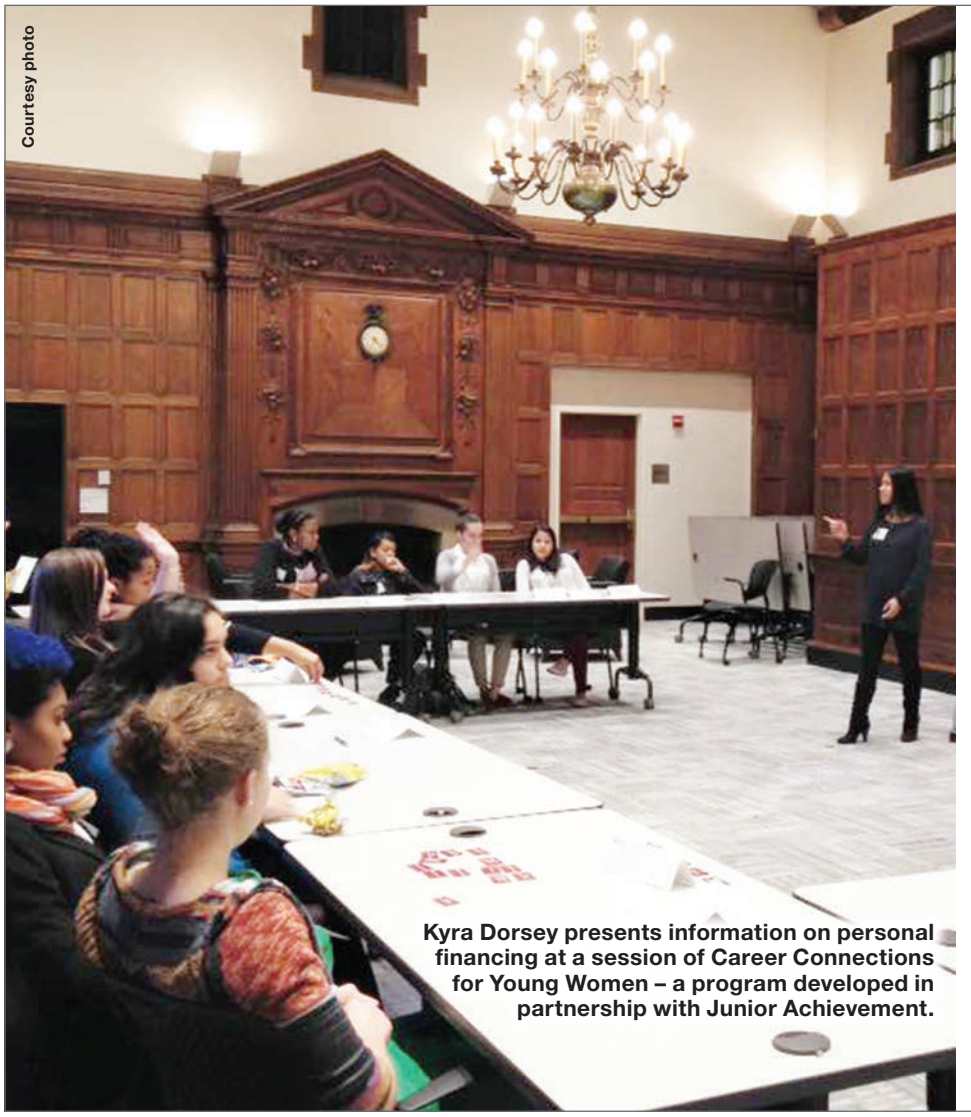
With two months remaining in the fiscal year, members have already put in more than 800 volunteer hours – nearly half by members living in West Hartford.

Of its 435 members, 103 are active, 26 are in their provisional first year and the others serve as sustaining members. West Hartford residents make up 40 percent of all members and 54 percent of active members.

Ninety-eight percent of members are college graduates, 46 percent of members have post-graduate education, 80 percent volunteer with other organizations and 45 percent have children at home. Eighty percent of women work outside the home – a change, Krug said, from the nonprofit's origins.

Along with Krug, President Elect Valerie Bischof, treasurer Denise Callan, secretary Molly Towne, community service council director Sarah Needham and membership council director Whitney Sweeney are all West Hartford residents.

Wendy Avery, a former president who joined in 1999 when she first moved to West Hartford, said, "It was a really great way to meet people and a really great way to get to know the town and the city because we have meetings all over



Courtesy photo

Kyra Dorsey presents information on personal financing at a session of Career Connections for Young Women – a program developed in partnership with Junior Achievement.

"We still have members now who were active in the league in the '70s and '80s. For many, the league is a lifelong membership."

–Wendy Avery

the place in interesting venues I wouldn't have gotten to see otherwise."

In addition to offering opportunities to meet the needs of the community, especially in Hartford, it also provides valuable leadership training, she said.

The league has evolved, changing with the times, Avery said. Decades ago, most members were not employed and had more time to give to volunteer work. At that time, one source of revenue for the Junior League was a project called Personal Papers for which stationary was sold through house parties, with a percentage of the sale providing income to the league.

While such things have changed, Avery said the organization's core values remain, offering the potential for leadership training and touching the community in a variety of ways. In the process, great friendships and lifelong affiliations are made.

"We continue to draw people," Avery said, and membership has remained relatively stable for 10 years, although, like other volunteer agencies, membership is down from peaks in the 1970s and '80s.

"We still have members now who were active in the league in the '70s and '80s. For many, the league is a lifelong membership."

Krug said the Junior League functions "very, very lean." One person is paid to staff the office 15 hours a week, but the rest of

Courtesy photo

Members pack toys in December.

the work – with one exception – is done by members volunteering.

"Everything we do, we do ourselves," she said. "if we need a lawyer, a member does it."

That way, funds raised are all channeled back to the community.

"They want my human hours. They want my time and abilities," said Krug, who reviews all the insurance polices.

She appreciates that, unlike some other organizations to which she belongs, "We get to volunteer within the community. Physically, we do the work. It feels good … to give."

The way the West Hartford-based league gives is somewhat different from other nonprofits.

Since 1921, it has been making a difference in Greater Hartford by assessing and identifying community needs, and then developing programs – sometimes forming collaborations – to help meet those needs. After the initiatives are running smoothly, they are handed off and other projects are begun.

For instance, once the backpack program could sustain itself, it was handed off to the John J. Driscoll United Labor Agency in Rocky Hill. The league collaborated with the Chrysalis Center and Foodshare to developed Freshplace, a fresh food pantry serving Hartford's Upper Albany and Asylum Hill neighborhoods.

That award-winning program is being replicated nationally by other Junior Leagues who request a copy of the handbook.

"We'll be involved – volunteering and giving financial assistance," Krug said. "We start a project. Three to six years later, we give it back [to the community when it's able to sustain itself]. We consider it a hand up, not a handout."

The organization's current focus is Empowering Women and Girls to Overcome Obstacles. To inspire young women to focus on career planning and financial independence, the league – in partnership with Junior Achievement – developed Career Connections for Young Women. The pilot program for Hartford-area high school girls was in 2015, and the first complete 11-week career academy just ended. It included interactive sessions with female professionals covering topics such as networking and job interviewing. Participants did job shadowing at various sites to learn about career opportunities in science, technology and other growing fields.

"We will start recruiting new students for the next session in the fall," Krug said. "We are committed to our involvement until at least 2018, depending on if they still need us."

For more than 30 years, members have been volunteering monthly at Loaves and Fishes in Hartford with the Super Sustainers program.

The longest-running program has

Past programs

1920s
- Maternal Milk Station, Visiting Nurse Association of Hartford
- Free Day Bed Fund, Hartford Hospital

1930s
- Children's Theatre Workshops
- South-End Day Nursery East Side Pre-school Project, Union Settlement House
- "The Story Lady," children's radio program, WTIC and Hartford Public Library

1940s
- Summer Camp, Connecticut Society for Crippled Children and Adults
- Volunteer Bureau of Greater Hartford

1950s
- Film Caption Bureau, American School for the Deaf
- Playground, Oak Hill School for the Blind
- Speech Therapy Department, Hartford Rehabilitation Center Inc.
- Job Training Program, Hartford Association for Retarded Children
- Education Program, Greater Hartford Symphony Society
- Atmospherium Projector, Children's Museum of Hartford

1960s
- Teacher for the Perceptually Handicapped Class, Newington Children's Hospital
- Basic Art Library, University of Hartford Art School
- Teacher Recruitment Program, Hartford Public Schools
- Psychiatric Social Center, Capitol Region Mental Health Association
- Child Development Program Supplement, Community Renewal Team
- "Handbook for the Handicapped," Rehabilitation Center, Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce
- Docent Program, Wadsworth Atheneum

1970s
- Historic Preservation Revolving Fund, Hartford Architectural Conservancy
- Somers Correctional Facility Sesame Street Playroom, Families in Crisis
- Tour Guide Volunteer Program and Exhibit, Children's Museum
- Computer and Video Instruction for the Deaf, American School for the Deaf

1980s
- Growing Up At Risk in Connecticut, Connecticut Association of Human Services
- Growing Older in Connecticut, Connecticut Association of Human Services
- A Visit to the Big House, Families in Crisis
- Niantic Prison Sesame Street Playroom, Families in Crisis
- Special Needs Adoption Conference, Child and Family Services
- PhoneFriend – CAPCAN, American Red Cross
- Gain Awareness Through Education Substance Abuse Prevention Program
- Teenage Parent Program, Hartford Board of Education

1990s
- Art Goes to School, The Music Company
- Souper Sustainers, Loaves and Fishes Ministries Soup Kitchen
- Child Care Grant Fund Project, Capitol Region Education Council and Community Renewal Team
- Young Women at Risk – Hartford Action Plan, Family Life Ministry Shepherds Center Inc.
- Friends of the Family The Children's Playscape at Charter Oak Landing, Riverfront Recapture Inc.
- Habitat for Humanity, Women's House
- Christmas in April, Hartford Family Resource Center, Martin Luther King Elementary School
- Cultivating Hope, Peter's Retreat
- Take 5, the Hartford Child Immunization Project

2000s
- Family School Connection, Children's Trust Fund and Center City Churches
- Rebuilding Together Greater Hartford
- Saturday Science Sampler, Connecticut Valley Girl Scouts and the University of Hartford
- The Children's Brochure, Greater Hartford Arts Council
- Souper Sustainers, Loaves and Fishes Ministries Soup Kitchen
- Freshplace, Foodshare and the Chrysalis Center
- The Backpack Program, Watkinson School and the Martin Luther King School

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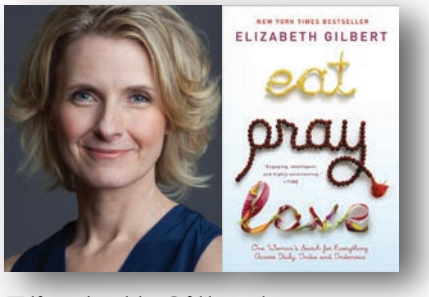

Elizabeth Gilbert
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Julie Krug, Roza Kogan and Kaitlin Halloran lend a hand at the league's 2015 show house on Orchard Road in West Hartford.

Courtesy photo

been The Clothes Horse. Begun more than 65 years ago, the thrift store has been on Park Road for more than 40 years. League members have donated $14,000 worth of goods to the store so far this fiscal year.

"Each active and provisional member volunteers in the store," Krug said. "So far this year, members have volunteered at the store for 117 hours, which assists in keeping payroll costs down. The profits from the store help sustain the league as well as assist in funding our programs and projects."

The store has outfitted brides, those attending funerals and proms, vacationers going on cruises, people going on job interviews and first dates, and actors needing costumes for plays, said manager Coreen Sunde, a past president and West Hartford resident.

Shoppers will find clothing and accessories for men, women and teens including such name brands as Bill Blass, Ralph Lauren, Tory Birch, Chicos, Brooks Brothers and Lilly Pulitzer. There is also a selection of vintage clothing, jewelry, housewares, bed linens, curtains and books.

"It's more like a boutique of beautiful clothes with great prices," Sunde said of the space, which was renovated a couple of years ago. "There is so much variety and great things to choose from, and the purchases help a very worthy cause."

Flo Harrison, a frequent shopper, purchased a deep purple Chinese coverlet for her guest room for $40.

"I always find something on sale and each time I visit the store. The staff are friendly, the atmosphere is pleasant and the shopping is great," she said.

In addition to revenue from the store, the organization collects dues, and every three years it puts together an elaborate decorator show house and sells tickets to tour it. Members have also held an annual "Links and Laughter" event.

The Hartford group is part of the Association of Junior Leagues International, one of the oldest and largest women's volunteer organizations in the world, comprised of more than 150,000 women in 291 leagues in four countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Mexico. It was founded in 1901 by social activist Mary Harriman.

Women over the age of 21 who demonstrate a commitment to voluntarism are invited to join. No sponsor or referral is necessary. For more information, visit jlhartford.org or call 860-233-4300. WHL

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Help your child love *music* and *dance*

Classes offer lifelong benefits

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

It may be fun to imagine your child as the next Joshua Bell or Misty Copeland when you sign up for music or dance lessons. Your child may have visions of being a star, basking in the spotlight surrounded by legions of adoring fans.

While many develop a lifelong love of music and dance, some children quickly decide that the lessons aren't for them. What's a parent to do when a child starts saying "I don't want to go!" when it's time for the weekly lesson?

The first aspect to consider is whether your child is indeed old enough for the activity. Todd Zurman, owner of Vortex Guitar Studio in Wethersfield, said that's more of a factor than many parents realize.

"I think in a perfect world after 8 [years of age] is a great time to start playing. Older students, they know what they want to play when they come in. They know their musical style," he said. "If they can't spell guitar, they probably shouldn't be taking it."

However, Zurman noted that it's not

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a hard and fast rule.

"I had one 5-year-old who liked listening to the Beatles, who liked listening to Led Zeppelin. He had great taste in music. That kid was a breeze to teach. I have 8-year-olds who don't listen to music; their parents don't like to listen to music," he said.

There's also a practical consideration with certain instruments, such as the guitar. And that's simply the size of the instrument may be too much for your child to handle.

"At 6 years old the smaller guitars can be harder to play," he said.

Other instruments might be more appropriate for younger students, such as piano.

"I think 5 seems to be the age that makes sense for starting off. I've had 4-year-olds and they can't sit still and they're not really ready," said Mike Montgomery of Newington Music, who teaches piano, drums, guitar and bass. "I have a lot of piano students. At that age it's a good instrument. There isn't a physical requirement on your fingers like guitar. Piano is great for 5-year-olds."

Don't worry that your child is too old to start. Despite the influence of his guitar-playing father, Zurman didn't start to play until he was in seventh grade. Previously, he played drums.

He said to give the lessons time.

"Dance particularly taught me discipline and gave me a love and appreciation for the arts. ... Kids need an outlet, a place to let go and be themselves. It takes time to find that, and it forces them to work hard. But it's worth it, for them and the parents."

– Diana Evjen

"If they've been wanting to play and they come to the first lesson and think they don't like teacher, take a month of lessons. It takes time to get used to each other," he recommended.

If your child still isn't into it, it may just be that the child is not ready.

Or, perhaps the child wants to play something else.

"If they want to play drums, let them try being a drummer. If they want to play guitar, let them try being a guitar player. They should have freedom of choice to try different things," he said.

Managing your child's expectations is also important.

Kids sometimes quit because "it's harder than they thought," Zurman said. "Years ago when Guitar Hero came out, kids were taking guitar because of the game. Then they find out they can't just play like Jimi Hendrix. They didn't know they'd have to practice."

Gregory Colossale, founder of BackBeat City in Glastonbury, agreed.

"It appears recently that it's instant gratification that they receive from other means. That isn't something that comes quickly from piano. I find that a constant issue. [Students are] a little more impatient," said Colossale who teaches piano, voice, show choir and acting. "They're not understanding that it's the practicing, the time spent outside of the lesson, is when they get better. It's not in the 30 or 40 minutes we spend together once a week."

He suggested working practice into what a child already is doing.

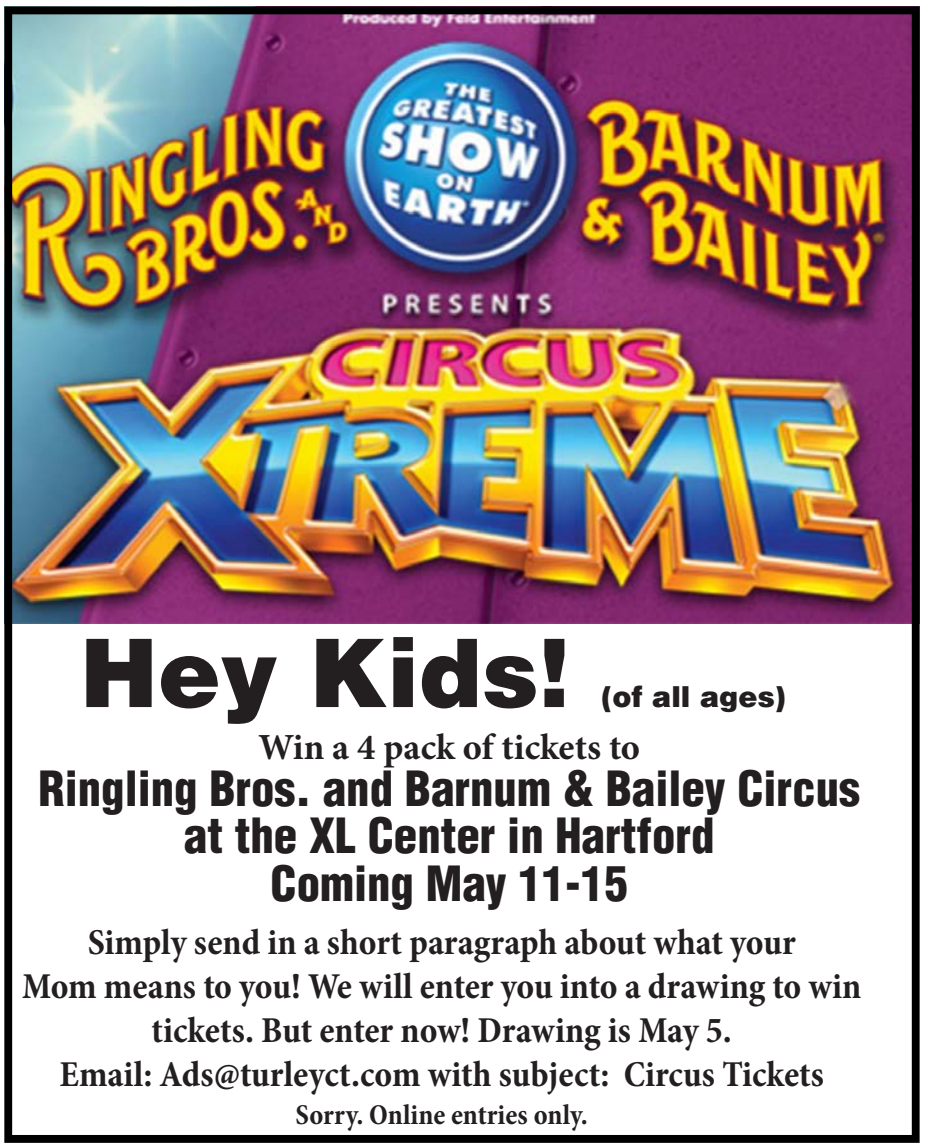
"[A child] is probably watching an hour of television a day, and there's probably 22 minutes of commercials. If they practice during the commercials, that's a really smart way to practice. It's blended inside of their life. You play into their world and show them how the piano can fit in."

While technology can be a hindrance – Zurman doesn't even have a computer in his office – there are ways that it can be helpful.

Colossale said that students can record themselves playing.

"They're able to hear how simple they once sounded and how they grow," he said.

Colossale suggested that parents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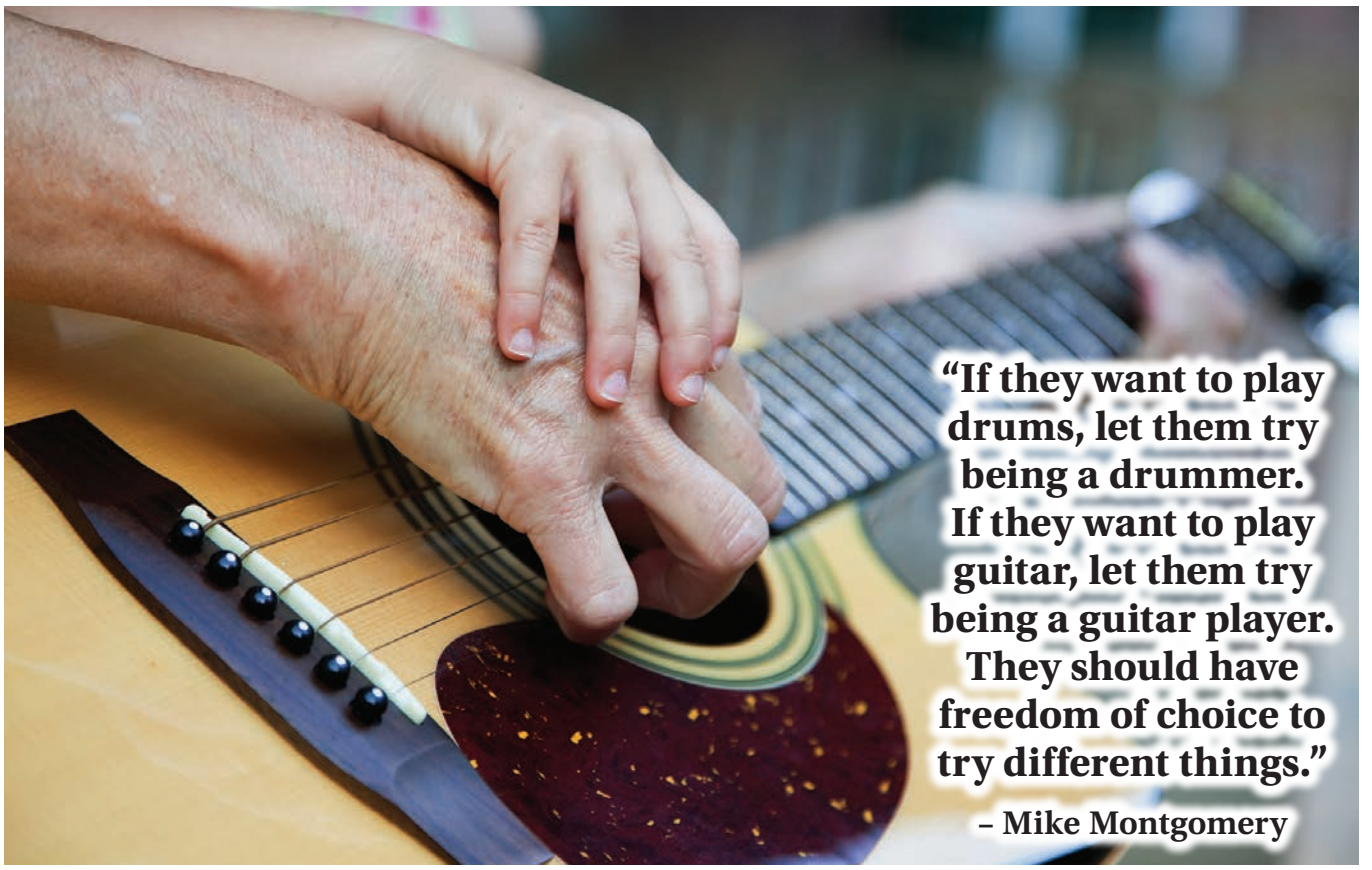
"If they want to play drums, let them try being a drummer. If they want to play guitar, let them try being a guitar player. They should have freedom of choice to try different things."
– Mike Montgomery

can help their child by making sure the piano is accessible, without books, plants or clutter blocking it.

"I think the best thing for a parent to do is encourage their young person to go up to the piano without prompting. Whether they improvise or make some noise or practice, encourage that and allow that to happen as much as possible," he said.

"Try not to complain about the noise," he added. "I was fortunate as a young person, I just banged on the piano and taught myself. Then it became an interest. I think it's about accessibility and your attitude toward it."

Gauging the love

While students are a little older when they begin music lessons, dance classes often start much earlier.

Shannon Barry, co-owner, Shamrock School of Irish Dance, which has satellite locations in West Hartford and Simsbury, started dancing when she was 4.

She said that children have varied reasons for not wanting to come to lessons – and sometimes, it's a lot more basic than parents realize.

"Through the years, I have found that the reason for young children between the ages of 4 and 7 would be that they simply don't want to leave the house. This might come as a surprise. However, when I have asked parents why, the answer is, 'When trying to leave the house to go to dance class, their child simply says I don't want to go.' I then have said to the parent that their child is doing well in class, pays attention, and understands and follows directions and movements, and really seem to enjoy it while in class. Unfortunately, it seems, possibly, parents might be a bit too willing to say OK when the child doesn't want to go because, as parents, we are all so busy with work, housekeeping and other activities that it becomes easier for the parent to just say OK to their child and not go to class rather than telling their child, 'It is time for dance class and we need to keep the commitment we made and finish the year,'" said Barry, who is certified through An Coimisiun le Rinci Gaelacha.

She said it's important to communicate with the instructor when a young child doesn't want to go to class.

"Ask to speak to the teacher and see if they are participating in class. Also, if your dance school allows you to watch a class from time to time, you should be able to tell how your child is doing that way," she said. "You definitely will know if your child enjoys what they are doing if they are dancing around your house practicing [what] they are working on in dance class."

It's a different situation for kids in middle or high school.

"The main reason usually is they have joined an after-school sport or have a lot of homework," Barry said.

Diana Evjen of Evjen Academy of Performing Arts in Farmington said that while scheduling is an issue, it can also help define where a child's interests are.

"The biggest reason for kids

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dropping their sports or extracurricular activities is overscheduling. And that isn't a bad thing. We have so many opportunities for children these days and they have the ability to find activities that suit them. We put them in dance and soccer and Girl Scouts or choir, and through the process of elimination, children are able to choose their best fit," Evjen said. "Parents should recognize that children are in the learning process, just the beginning, of their journey into finding their strong suits. With my own kids, I try to gauge their 'love' for the sport or activity."

She doesn't evaluate this by their willingness to practice, rather by their attitudes during and after the activity.

"As a mom in this generation, where a whole world is available for kids through iPads and cell phones and Xbox, etc., I feel like kids need to do something, anything, in a group or as part of a team, where they train [or] practice together and learn how to work as a team player," she said. "Dance particularly taught me discipline and gave me a love and appreciation for the arts. Everyone is different, but dance was and still is my outlet and I needed that when I was growing up. Kids need an outlet, a place to let go and be themselves. It takes time to find that, and it forces them to work hard. But it's worth it, for them and the parents."

Barry noted that the parents' attitude can make a difference.

"The parent's job is to give encouragement and to do the best they can. Make sure you are available to watch them practice when asked. Be excited for them if they have had a hard time with a new move or routine and now have mastered it," she recommended.

Barry said there are numerous benefits to taking classes.

"Dance or music is a great outlet for children to relieve stress. It builds confidence, great self-esteem and dance, of course, helps with physical fitness," she said, adding that dance and music can also help with math and public speaking.

Montgomery actually builds math into his lessons, such as talking about how many quarter notes fit in a measure. He also noted that music lessons can help children find their place in the world.

"It gives them something to be good at. It happened to me. I was good at music when I was younger; there were other kids like me in band. I remember really liking it and I was good at it, and I could fit in. I wasn't the sports kid. When I was in gym, I'm the last kid to get picked," he remembered. "If a kid likes music, it's a good thing to try. You can really see them light up." WHL

Learn more at backbeatcity.com, evjenacademy.com, newingtonmusic.com, shamrockdancestudio.com and vortexguitarstudio.com.

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Super snacks

Healthy, fun treats your kids will love

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Every parent knows the plaintive cry of "I'm hungry; what's there to eat?" Whether it's after school or for a summer playdate, snacks can be an important nutrition boost, or even a fun project.

"Snacks are considered mini-meals and help children focus at school, on homework and provide them with energy, vitamins and minerals to grow along with satisfying their hunger monster. Snacks are a great way for kids to enjoy fruits, vegetables, yogurt and other foods they may not be getting at their regular meals. Make sure to offer snacks that contain both protein and fiber such as a clementine and a cheese stick. Snacks help children refuel between meals and satisfy their appetites," noted Beth Chatfield, clinical dietitian with Connecticut Children's Medical Center, who also works with the CCMC Specialty Care Center in Farmington.

"As a professionally trained chef, one of my greatest joys is being in the kitchen and experimenting with new recipes. Over the past several months, I have been focusing most of my experimentation on recipes that appeal to kids," said Rita Neal, a mother of two.

She helped a group of parents organize Growing Great Schools, with a mission to promote childrens' and family wellness

"One of the ways Growing Great Schools does this is by offering getCOOKing, a program that teaches kids and teens how to cook. In addition, getCOOKing focuses on where food actually comes from, why it's important to eat local, seasonal foods and food traditions," Neal said.

In addition to creating recipes, Neal also likes to keep easy-to-grab foods for snacks, including apple slices, red pepper slices, carrot sticks, celery sticks, sliced cheddar cheese, clementines, frozen edamame in pods, nuts, bananas and other fruit.

Of course, having healthy foods on hand and getting kids to eat them are two different things, even when you're an accomplished chef.

Executive Chef Jeffrey Gordon of Stew Leonard's in Newington, said that when his kids were in elementary and middle schools, he would go into their classrooms and make fun dishes.

"Meanwhile, they won't eat anything unless it's brown," he said of his kids who are now 17 and 20. "With my son, if it's not pizza or pasta or some type of brown substance, it's still really tough and I'm trained at what I do!"

Trying to get extra nutrition such as protein and iron into his daughter's diet has been another challenge. She is an athlete and also has low iron levels.

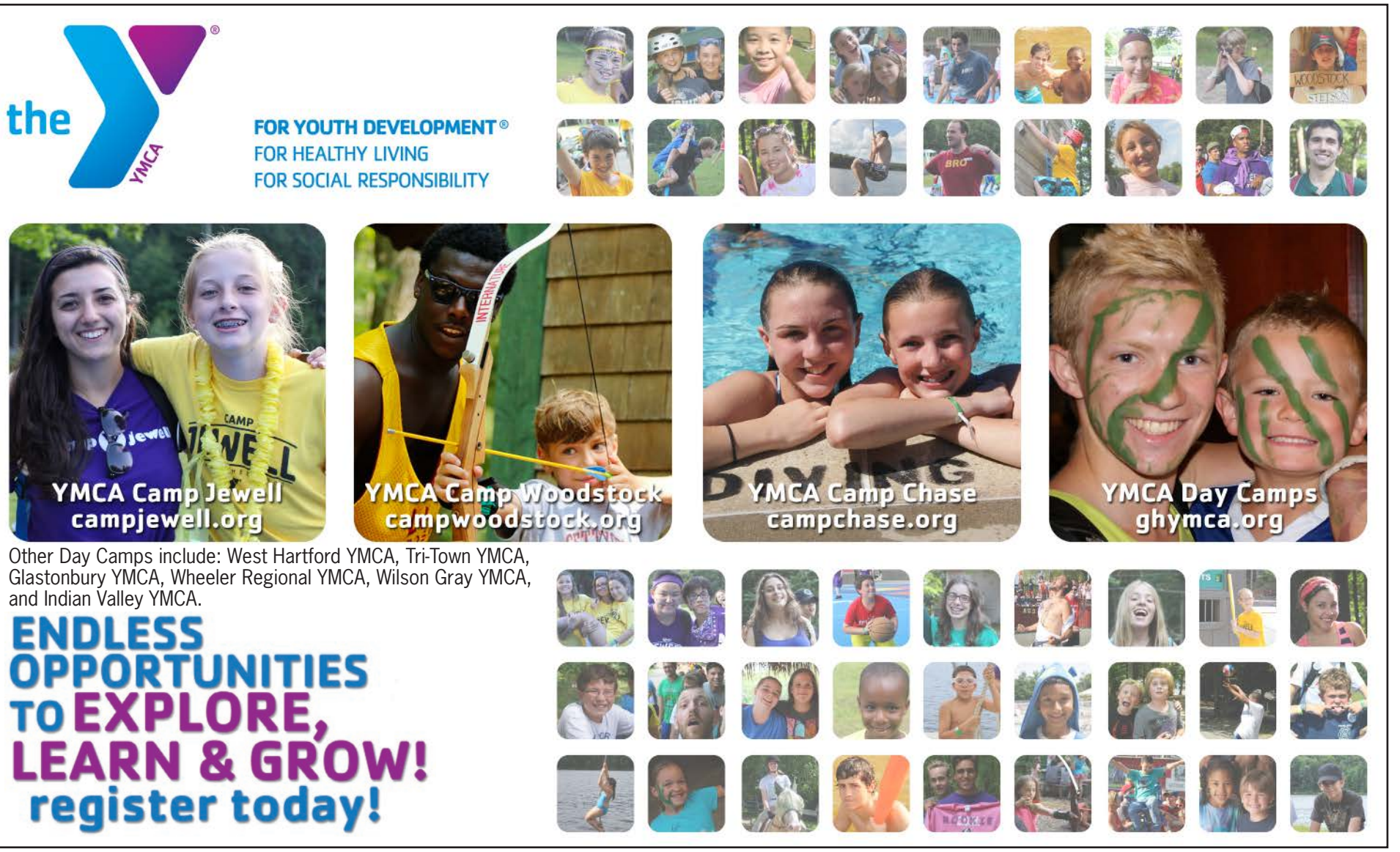
"She loves smoothies, and basically I've been able to switch the ingredients around, where she doesn't know they're in there. I'm looking for how do I get the vitamins and minerals and things they need to make them healthy, to help with their brain growth and their endurance."

Gordon said that younger children are often interested in the cooking process and want to be involved, such as decorating gingerbread men.

"A kid, especially in elementary school, loves to be interactive with whatever you're making. I think kids want to be part of the mix," he said.

LIFE spoke to several chefs in the area to get some of their favorite, original recipes for making snacks for kids.

If you're thinking ahead to summer, another session of getCOOKing at the Mandell JCC in West Hartford



will be held the week of August 18. The program is sponsored by Growing Great Schools, based in West Hartford. For information visit growinggreatschools.org.

Executive Chef Jeffrey Gordon of Stew Leonard's in Newington has developed the following recipes, testing them on his toughest customers – his own kids.

Chef Jeff's Power Punch Smoothie

Ingredients:

1/3 cup almond milk
6-8 strawberries, stems removed
1 whole banana
1 tbsp. blackstrap molasses
1 tbsp. agave nectar or honey
½ cup crushed ice

Directions:

Add all ingredients into blender and blend until smooth. Makes one serving.

Chatfield has developed the following recipes. For more ideas, she recommends checking out snacks from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics online.

Left Over Trail Mix

Have kids get a big bowl and put in leftovers of opened bags of:

popcorn
high fiber cereal
mini Triscuits
whole wheat Goldfish
nuts (if over age 4)
mini chocolate chips

Tortilla Pizzas

Ingredients:

small whole wheat tortillas
salsa
shredded cheddar cheese
optional toppings (beans, cilantro, chopped green peppers, chopped black olives)

Directions:

Place tortilla on foil-lined tray and mound the salsa and cheese on each tortilla. Cook in oven or toaster oven until cheese is melted and edges of tortilla are browned. Add a dollop of sour cream or guacamole if desired.

Multi-Layer Parfait in a Cup

Ingredients:

seedless grapes, quartered
plain nonfat Greek yogurt
diced pears or any other fruit (strawberries, blueberries, mandarin oranges)
granola
roasted pumpkin seeds
2 teaspoons maple syrup

Directions:

Layer all ingredients, dividing equally in mini containers

"There are times when something more substantial is necessary and I have a few tried-and-true recipes that have passed muster not only on my kiddos but also with the kids that have taken my getCOOKing classes," said Chef and Culinary Educator Rita Neal. "One favorite is the seedy granola bar.... These are sweet, chewy, packed with flavor, kids universally love them, and they are filling, have protein, fat, fiber and minerals. ... Another great feature of these is they do not need baking! So fast and easy."

Granola Bars

Ingredients:

1 cup packed pitted prunes
1/4 cup honey or maple syrup
1/4 cup sun nut butter or peanut butter
3/4 cup pumpkin seeds
1 1/2 cup old fashioned rolled oats
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions:

Process prunes in a food processor until it forms a dough like ball on the side of processor. You may toast the oats for 10 minutes in a 325 F oven. Warm honey and peanut butter. Place prunes, oats, honey and peanut butter mixture, pumpkin seeds, vanilla and cinnamon into a large bowl. Mix everything together making sure the prune mixture gets distributed. Transfer to an 8x8 dish and press down firmly until flattened. Cover and let set in the refrigerator, or in the freezer. Cut and wrap individual bars and store in the fridge or freezer for ready-to-go snacking.

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LIFE with kids

Maribeth Abrams is a Glastonbury-based nutritionist and cookbook author specializing in a plant-strong style of eating for health and well-being. The following recipe is from her cookbook, "The 4 Ingredient Vegan." Learn more at maribethabrams.com.

Peanut Butter Chews (vegan)

"Turn snacking into an afternoon healthy baking activity!" Abrams suggested. "With a recipe this easy, even the little ones can lend a hand. The ingredients are wholesome and the batter is delicious eaten straight from the bowl."

Yield: About 36 cookies

Ingredients:

1/2 cup natural peanut butter
2/3 cup agave nectar
1 1/2 cups rolled oats - or quick-cooking oats if you want softer cookies
1/3 cup chocolate chips, dried cherries or raisins

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Put the peanut butter and agave nectar in bowl and stir until thoroughly combined. Stir in the oats and chocolate chips.

Drop the batter onto the prepared sheet using a teaspoon and bake for 10 minutes. Let cool on baking sheet for 10 minutes then transfer to wire rack to cool completely. **WHL**

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Peer pressure. Test pressure. Parental pressure. Sibling pressure. Social media pressure. It's tough being a teenager. This program will help students deal with all of life's pressures as a teen in America today. **Open to boys and girls entering grades 6-11. June 27-30.**

Digital Arts Programs
STEM-themed programs offered in collaboration with Black Rocket. All programs are co-ed except Girl Gamers. **Open to ages 8-10 and 11-14. Weekly programs will run July 11-August 5.**

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July 25-29: ages 10-13;
Aug. 1-5: ages 14-18.

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The Power of Creative Writing
This one-week creative writing program will provide attendees an environment that nurtures creative writing skills across genres. Young writers will participate in activities that stimulate creativity and shape good writing practices. The experience will culminate in a final performance/reading to showcase the week's work. **Open to girls ages 13-16. Week of July 25-29.**

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Popular playtime picks

Today's hottest games to entertain kids this summer

Compiled by Alison Jalbert

Zombie Run!

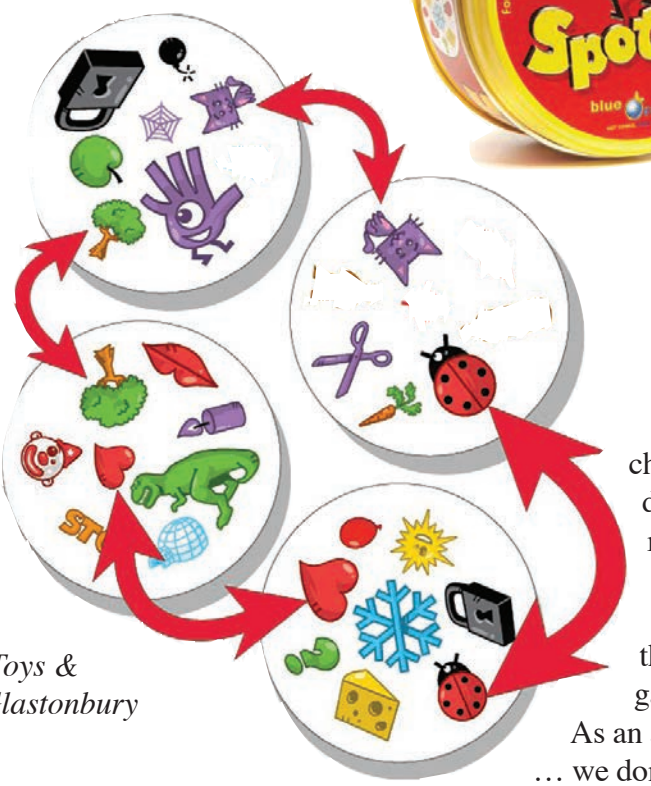
"The cards all have zombie kind of things on them. Zombies are popular and it's an easy-to-learn game. That's part of the draw; when people come in looking for games, as an adult, they want to have fun playing the game, too."
–Sara Scott, owner of The Perfect Toy in Avon

IQ Bit

"It's a one-player game with 120 different ways to play it. It starts out really easy, but with 120 different ways to play, it gets harder as you go on. We have a demo of it up on the counter [and people] really get into it. That's always an indication that it's a good game."
–Dave Ekwall, owner of The Wooden Toy in Wethersfield

Wet Head

"It's a new game – you wear a helmet filled with water and pull out a stick with the possibility of getting the whole helmet of water [on you]."
–Kim Reed, owner of Pinwheels Toys & Games in Glastonbury



Spot It!

"The cards have a variety of pictures on them, with one matching picture on every card. You want to be the first one to spot the match. Younger children do really well [with this game]. As an adult … we don't see it as quickly. It's challenging for adults – fun, but we don't tend to win."
–Deb Necker, owner of Necker's Toyland in Simsbury
WHL

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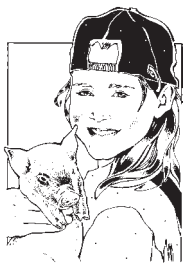

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Safety first

Parents need to closely monitor children and modern technology

by Mark Jahne
Staff Writer

The world of technology is rapidly changing, and those most adept at using it are often children and teenagers. But experts say young people tend not to understand the risks awaiting them in cyberspace or the need to use this technology wisely.

Cell phones, especially smart phones with Internet access, are in the hands of countless young people. They are the masters of text messaging, Facebook, Instagram and all the other forms of social media.

"The kids are the 'technados' and we adults are the immigrants. It is much more intuitive for our children," said Emily Daigle, director of special services for the Wethersfield Public Schools.

Educators and law enforcement worry that the innocence of youth, when mixed with advanced technology, is a recipe for disaster. This is separate from the technology used in schools that, in some districts, can be taken home.

"Technology has moved faster than our ability to educate on the ethics and safe use of it. We see that not only with our kids, but with adults. Technology etiquette, I would call it," Daigle said.

"We're always trying to multitask. It just never ends. I think we need boundaries. We need to respect face-to-face time," she added.

American society has become one of immediate gratification, she said, so people are constantly checking their phones and texting, even while driving.

Daigle said few children, including the older ones, seem to understand that whatever they send into cyberspace is there forever and can come back to haunt them. In her opinion, parents have the ultimate responsibility to decide if and when to allow children to have a cell phone, personal email account, Facebook page and other social media.

She emphasized that parents always need to know what their children are doing with the technology they are allowed to have and must stand up to complaints that this is something personal and private. Peer pressure among youth is not an excuse for a parent to back down.

One idea she suggested is to place tracking devices on phones that will identify where a child is at all times. She firmly believes that cell phone and other technology use should not be allowed to proceed without strict monitoring until that son or daughter heads off to college.

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"Parents need to understand that kids are vulnerable. They don't have the knowledge to make safe decisions," Daigle said. "Make the decision that is right for your house."

Parents especially need to be aware of how their children are using social media. Cyber bullying is a rapidly growing problem.

"That has changed so profoundly for these kids," she said.

In the old days, bullying was limited to the bully, the victim and perhaps a couple of other children who witnessed the cruel behavior in school or on the playground.

The victim could get away from it by going home.

Now bullying and other harmful remarks are posted online where they can be seen by thousands and those comments never go away. Daigle called cyber bullying pervasive in school districts around the country.

In a few instances, victims have committed suicide.

She said the Wethersfield district works hard to educate students about this problem and how to respect and treat one another.

Daigle urges parents in every town to work in partnership with the schools on these issues.

Whenever an allegation of bullying is brought to school administrators in her district, the school resource officer is informed and Facebook and Twitter accounts are reviewed as part of the investigation.

Any student identified as a bully must go through a remediation process to learn why such behavior is unacceptable.

"What they say is out there and it's now permanent. It's a lot easier to say something cruel when it's not face to face," Daigle said.

She warned parents that children will do their best to get around any blocks or boundaries placed on their use of technology and the Internet.

She compared granting a child free access to cyberspace to handing over the keys to the family car without first requiring some driving lessons.

Website domains, Twitter handles, Facebook pages, email accounts, even ring tones can all create problems.

Something posted by a 14-year-old today can come back to haunt that person when it comes time to apply for college or a job.

"I'm not a big fan of kids having phones with the Internet on them," said Jamie DeSimone, community services officer for the Newington Police Department.

She said there is no reason why parents cannot give their child a flip phone or track phone to enable them to stay in touch without access to cyberspace.

She agreed with Daigle that smart phones and other modern technology are not a young person's right, especially since the parents pay for this technology. Safety is paramount.

"Kids are curious and they are too trusting. These kids put out too much information," DeSimone said. "I'm not a big fan of kids having Facebook or Twitter or Instagram. That's a pedophile's dream."

She said pedophiles often pretend to be older children. They identify vulnerabilities and then groom their eventual victims.

"They can get you on your phone, they can get you on your computer, they can get you on whatever gaming system you use," she said.

The officer spoke of teenage girls posting inappropriate photos of themselves online that can cause great damage to them later in their lives.

"Colleges and places of employment do Internet searches," she said.

When they find this kind of material, it does not bode well for the applicant, even if it was posted in a moment of immaturity many years ago.

She teaches Internet safety in the schools and spoke of one particular incident that resulted in a violent crime.

"We had a Myspace case that turned into a sexual assault," DeSimone said. "It's a scary world." **WHL**

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LIFE with kids

Music is his love

Noah Yontef Mathog performs at Carnegie Hall

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

Noah Yontef Mathog was in first grade when he took up the piano and he has been playing ever since.

Now a student at King Philip Middle School, Noah, 13, has since learned to play the saxophone, an instrument he picked up rather quickly, and this year he has added learning to play the clarinet to his agenda.

Jazz and classical are his preferred styles of music to listen to and play, and he and some friends have their own jazz band, Muzak3. He also plays in his school's jazz combo group and plans on playing piano for his school's orchestra group, Bow Strings.

Noah had the honor of performing at

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Carnegie Hall for the second time in February.

The first time he was 8.

This time he had to pass an exam from the Royal Conservancy Music Development Program, which he did, scoring a 93, the highest score in the state at his level.

Noah competed with other music students during the exam, and the New York City performance was a recital for the top musicians.

"The first time I was at Carnegie Hall I was in shock for the entire thing," Noah said. "The second time I was able to enjoy it and absorb it and take my time. That was good, it will stay in my memory for a long time."

Noah performed the third movement of Muzio Clementi's "Sonata for Piano in G Major."

"I like it; it's a fun piece to play," Noah said.

"And he nailed it," his proud mother, Lori Yontef Mathog, said, adding that he had an entire row of friends and family in the concert hall supporting him.

Noah has experience performing for a crowd, not only at school concerts and at his neighborhood summer block party, but he also surprised his friends and family at his bar mitzvah earlier this year when he joined the hired band at the piano, added the harmonica and sang Billy Joel's "Piano Man."

During his bar mitzvah ceremony at Beth El Temple, the choir sang one of his compositions.

The musician was able to warm up for his special ceremonial

"I know music is always going to be a part of my life."

–Noah Yontef Mathog

Noah Mathog plays an original improvised piece for Temple Beth El Cantor Joseph Ness. The cantor was his adviser for his bar mitzvah and Noah has composed original pieces of music for services at the temple with the cantor's help.

Photos by Lisa Brisson

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performance through his bar mitzvah's community service project, which for Noah could only mean one thing – playing piano – which he did at area assisted living facilities.

"I know music is always going to be a part of my life," Noah said.

Looking ahead, he would like to play in the West Hartford Pops 'n Jazz program and continue with the jazz band at King Philip Middle School.

Noah studies piano with instructor Elaine Silbereis.

When he is not busy with his music Noah said that he enjoys reading, especially science fiction and fantasy. While at this time he is uncertain if he wants to become a performer, Noah is sure he wants to continue to study music.

In addition to playing, Noah has created several original pieces.

"When I am bored I sit at the piano composing," he said.

Lori is not surprised by her son's interest saying that she had known from the time he was a baby that he had musical aspirations. She joked that if there were a bongo lying nearby, her son would find it. She indulged his early interest in music by listening to Baby Mozart and attending Music Together programs with him.

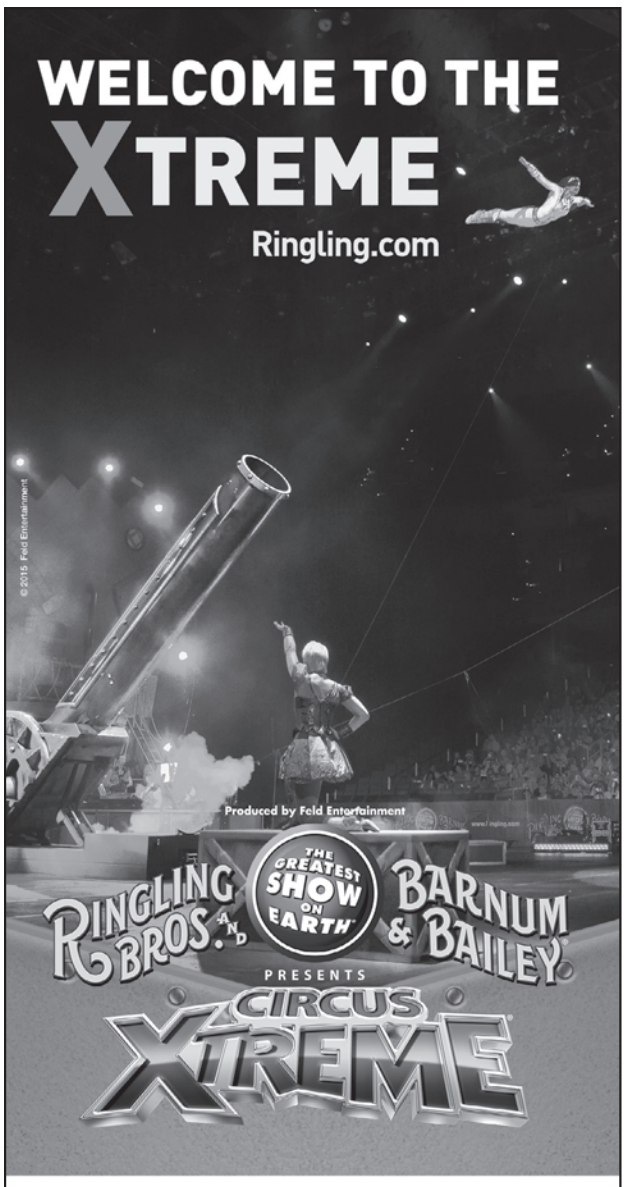
"I think it's always been in him," she said. "It was a gift he had inside of him."

His mother admires the fact that not only has he learned a variety of music through the years, but that her son has a good understanding of reading music and how it all works together, skills she feels helped him learn the Torah passages in Hebrew for his bar mitzvah.

Lori enjoys listening to her son play while she is busy taking care of household chores. A dancer herself, she has tried to learn to play the piano so she could play a duet with her son. She took a break but hopes to get back to it one day.

In the meantime, her younger son, Jacob, has taken up the drums.

"I'd like to think I had something to do with it," Lori said of her sons' musical talents. "It would be neat to go back in the family tree and see if there are any musicians there." **WHL**



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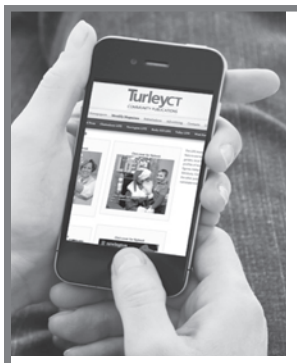

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On the case

Police officers in two towns rally to support one of their own

by Mark Jahne
Staff Writer

By all accounts, Christopher Tyler, 28, is a fine young man and a highly professional law enforcement officer. He's also a tall and physically strong athlete who played Division I college football.

Since last year he has been battling a rare form of brain cancer that his father, Clyde, said almost never occurs in adults. But Chris refuses to let his illness get him down and still goes to work whenever he is healthy enough to do so.

He was diagnosed in the fall of 2015 and had the tumor surgically removed. Then came six weeks of daily radiation. Things were looking up when the cancer reappeared several weeks ago, according to his father.

Chris is a member of the West Hartford Police Department, following the example of several relatives who worked in law enforcement. He grew up in Rocky Hill, where his father was a police officer for 34 years before retiring in 2010 to fight his own battle against cancer caused by years of using a hand-held radar device to track speeders.

Chris graduated from Rocky Hill High with excellent grades and set school records in several sports while participating in football, indoor track and outdoor track. His proud father recalled his state championship in the shot put.

"He's a good person. Even when he was a little kid, he would stick up for kids who were being picked on," Clyde said, recalling his son coming to the aid of an Iranian immigrant who was being relentlessly harassed by other students at RHHS.

Chris earned an undergraduate degree from Stony Brook University and played tight end on its football team. He lives in West Hartford now with his wife, Brittany, and their son, Braydon.

Lt. Ted Stoneburner, the head of community relations for the West Hartford police, called Chris a model officer, one of the best young cops in the department.

"He's a self-starter. He's up and coming in this department: sharp, sure, proactive," Stoneburner said. "He's a go-getter. He's smart. Everything he does, he does very well."

Chris joined the department in 2010 and has already been appointed to such select duties as SWAT team and field training officer. He also serves on the Community Interaction Team, a crime prevention unit that operates as an independent arm of the department to address areas where extra attention is needed to suppress criminal activity.

"Even when he was a little kid, he would stick up for kids who were being picked on."
–Clyde Tyler

Stoneburner noted that appointment to CIT is only by the recommendation of higher-ranking officers. Many who have served in that unit over the years have gone on to become members of the WHPD command staff.

Stoneburner said one of the ways Chris' fellow officers are assisting him is by donating the sick days allotted to them by contract to what is called a "sick bank." Their days can then be used by Chris so that he continues to get paid during those periods while he is on medical leave.

They are also covering his shifts when he is unable to work so that he can remain an active member of the department. His father said Chris has used up all of his sick time and most, if not all, of his vacation days.

"West Hartford, they couldn't do enough for him," a grateful Clyde said. "The first surgery was rough on him."

Virtually every member of the department visited Chris after his surgery, including the top brass. They cut his grass, trimmed the bushes and did anything else they could think of to help.

Doctors and hospitals in Hartford had so little experience with treating this particular form of adult cancer that the family opted to have him treated at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston instead. Even that facility had only seen limited examples of this diagnosis.

Clyde said his son is a fighter who refuses to give in to his illness. The young man still works out under a physician's guidance and doesn't want to talk about his situation with anyone outside of the family. He declined to be interviewed for this story.

"He's always been a tough kid. He's got a very high pain tolerance," Clyde said.

Griffin Tyler, a cousin of Chris, established a GoFundMe page to help pay for the accumulating medical expenses. Clyde said the total raised in just four weeks was approaching $50,000.

Many local coaches and teachers are also donating money; Chris is the son of Barbara Tyler, a teacher at West Hill School. He also has a sister, Kelley. Many retired Rocky Hill police officers gave money in honor of their service with Clyde. Current officers are doing the same.

The Rocky Hill police union made a donation.

"The union has reached out through the social media arena. Individual officers are making contributions," veteran Lt. Rob Catania said.

He worked with Clyde and has known Chris all his life.

"He's a fantastic kid," Catania said.

Clyde said Chris recently participated, to the best of his ability, with fellow WHPD officers in an annual SWAT Challenge. Attendees at the post-event dinner raised $5,000 for his family, an amount that was matched by Stag Arms, a New Britain-based gun manufacturer.

When Chris graduated from the police academy he was number one on the hiring list for multiple towns, according to his father. He selected West Hartford because of its reputation as one of the best municipal law enforcement agencies in Connecticut. **WHL**

Courtesy photo

Officer Christopher Tyler of the West Hartford Police Department is receiving plenty of support as he battles a rare type of brain cancer.

Courtesy photo

Just hanging around are members of the Parachute Improv, an improvisational group from Conard High School.

IMPROV from on Page 16

"I joined freshman year because a junior at the time wanted me to participate," Owen Painter said. "I liked it a lot."

Two Conard alums started the group and each year it has been passed down to new enthusiasts.

Parachute rehearses about three times a week. Owen said the meetings are less of a rehearsal and more to do with building a group dynamic and connection. The more they get to know each other, the easier their skits will flow.

The key to a successful skit, Gerson said, is to have good listening skills.

"Technically it's not a rehearsal, it's practice," Gerson said. "It's so necessary to be on the same wave length."

When the group does get together, they often play games, especially word association games, an exercise that helps them to think on their feet.

"It's actually not as big of a jump as I thought it would be," senior George Murray said of getting in tune with fellow members.

New members, Gerson said, are often pushed to get right in the skits so they begin to feel more comfortable more quickly.

"A lot of it is self confidence," Mary said. "I remember my first show. I was scared to death to do anything."

For Gerson, the most challenging part is what he called "the pre-show jitters." He goes on stage with that attitude that all he is doing is joking with his friends.

"You just hope you don't say something that leaves the room silent," he said.

For Owen, the key to making each sketch a success is knowing his fellow members as well as he does.

"We can rely on each other pretty well," he said.

"If a joke falls flat, someone is always there to pick up another line," Gerson said.

Because the group has worked together for years and know each other so well, the jokes come one after another and it is not difficult for them to pick up the crowd and get them engaged in what is happening on stage.

"There is like this adrenaline you get that you just don't get in rehearsal," Mary said.

Traditionally, Parachute has put on two shows a year at Conard High, although this year the group has done three and hopes to add two more before the end of the school year; the goal had been to put on a show each month, but the group got a late start.

"This environment just feels so good," Gerson said. "Performing with these guys feels really natural."

With improv under their belts, many members have taken their acting chops into other performances.

"I love performing anywhere," Mary said.

This year Owen has the role of Romeo in the school's spring production of "Romeo and Juliet."

Members are appreciative of the way their non-Parachute friends support them. All of their shows are free and they have noticed that not only do family and close friends come to see them, but so do some unexpected people.

Gerson, who has also performed in several plays and musicals, said one of his pals, a running back on the football team, has come to see the Parachute shows.

"It's nice having your friends be supportive," he said.

George said he was bullied into getting on the stage to do theater productions simply because he was taking a stagecraft class and his teacher encouraged him to try out for a role in "Peter Pan."

"I've been in every play since," George said.

"It's like a sport, it helps you build discipline and you feel at home. It's a family. You get an opportunity to work really hard. I think it's a great way to spend your time," Owen said of improv.

Personal growth is something members said they have gained from being a part of the comedy group.

"For me personally, I struggled socially. With Parachute you forget that. It's not hard to make up stuff on the spot," Gerson said.

"It's made me appreciate drama more," Mary said, adding that in her freshman and sophomore years she played soccer, and this year she opted to stay off the field and participate in the fall production instead.

"The bonds you make are so different than the ones you make in sports," Mary said. WHL

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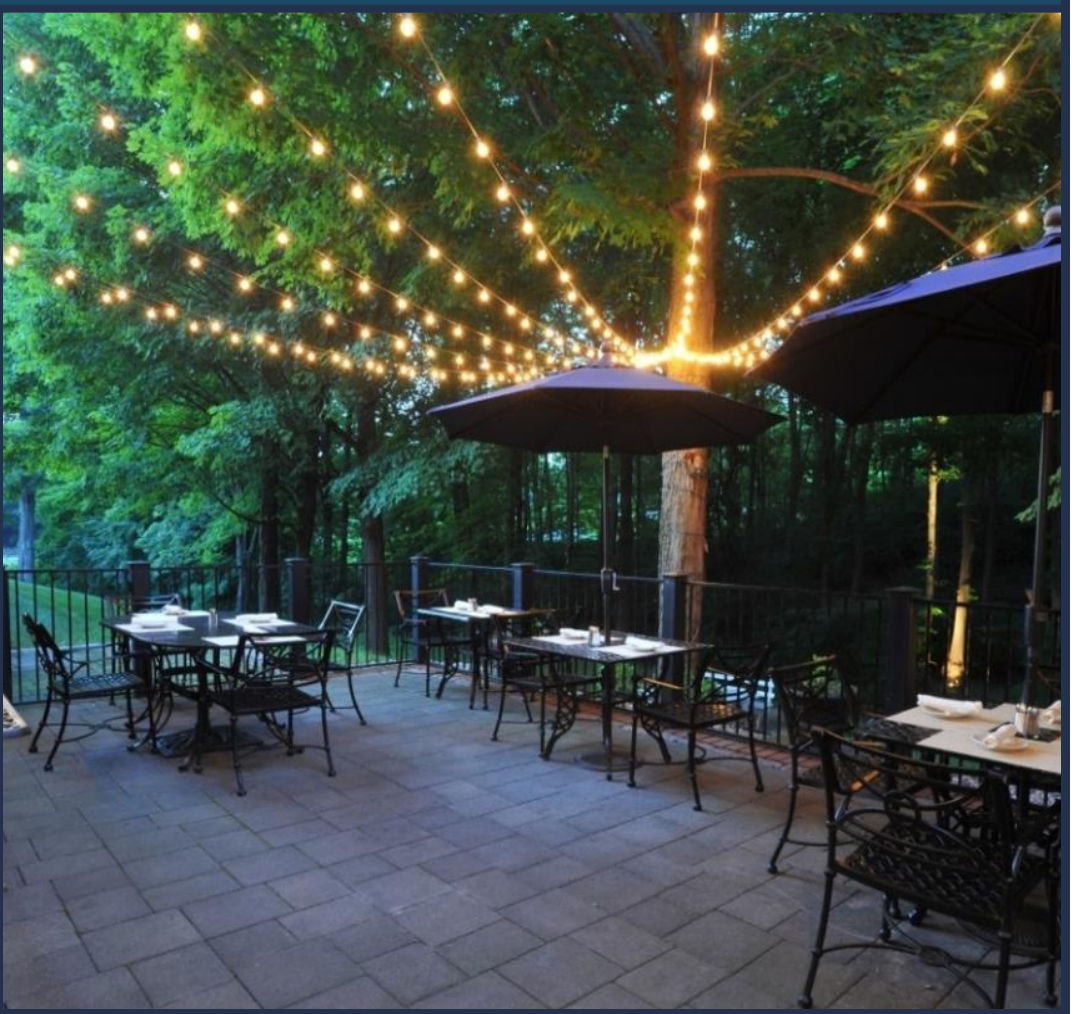

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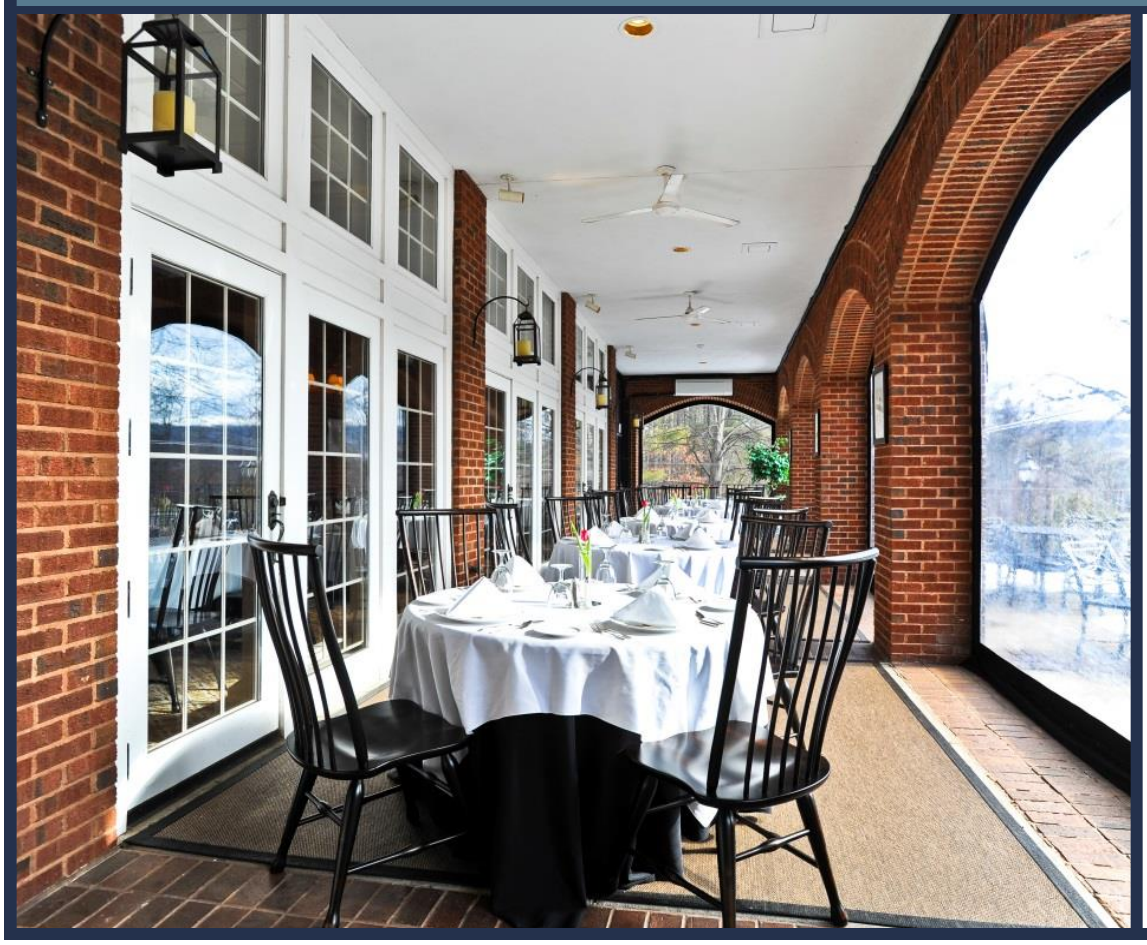

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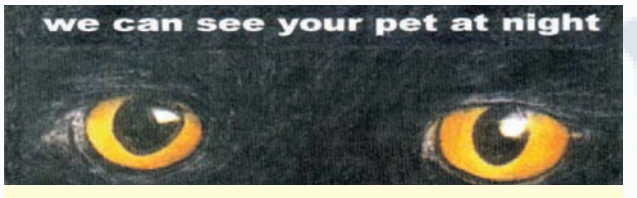

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KEITH TURLEY, Publisher

EDITORIAL
Abigail Albair, Executive Editor
aalbair@turleyct.com
Lynn Woike, Editor
Alison Jalbert, Assistant Editor

STAFF WRITERS
Alicia B. Smith, Allie Rivera, Mara Dresner, David Heuschkel, Ted Glanzer, Sloan Brewster

ADVERTISING SALES
Melissa Friedman, Advertising Director
melissa@turleyct.com, 860-978-1345
Lisa Oster-Zippin
lisa@turleyct.com, 860-264-5652

PAGE DESIGNERS
Daniel Kornegay, Cynthia Martel, Robert Sirois

GRAPHICS DEPARTMENT
Barbara Ouellette, Production Manager
ads@turleyct.com, 860-264-5523
Maureen LaBier, Production Assistant
Corley Fleming, Cynthia Martel, Kathy Kokoszka, Cindie Cagenello

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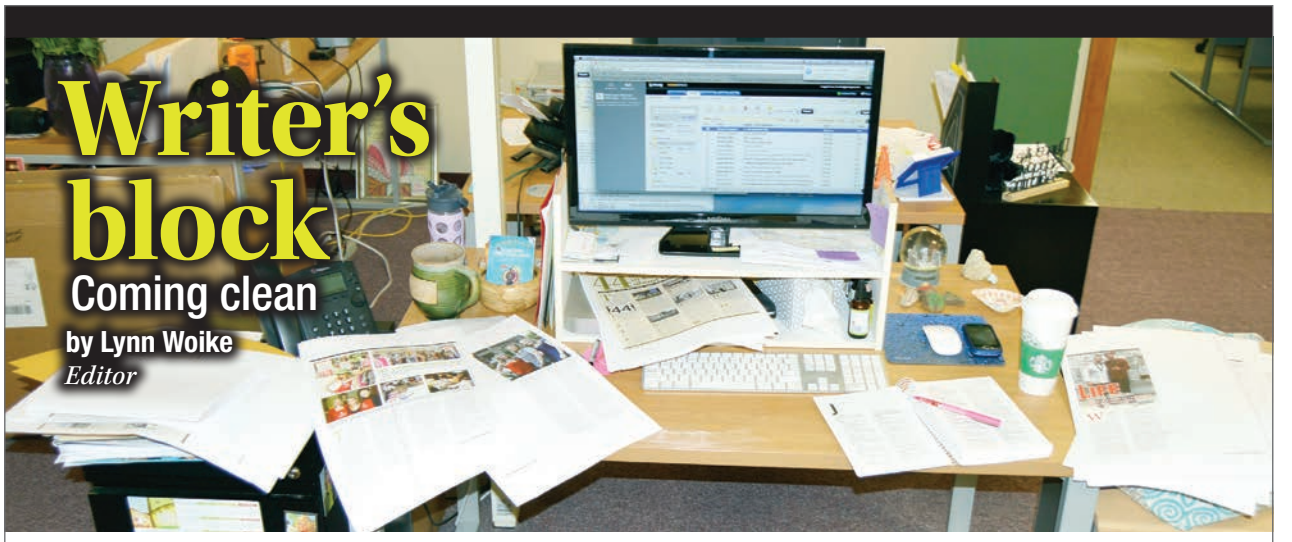

Writer's block

Coming clean

by Lynn Woike
Editor

My idea of spring cleaning is to come clean about the fact that my house will never truly be clean because I am a clutterer.

Contemporary culture imposes minimalism on all of us as a moral and spiritual state of being. Our enormously materialistic society is, oddly, obsessed with ridding itself of clutter.

My neighbor is passionate about her minimalist style. A co-worker admits to being obsessive-compulsive about having everything neat and orderly.

A friend, I am convinced, fakes an allergy to my cat as an excuse not to come over because my house is mismatched and messy, while her house is spotless and decorated better than some photographed on the pages of Elle Decor and House Beautiful.

I think there is a kind of freedom that comes with messiness. It is a form of surrender. I can't control the number of journals, pens, candles and magazines I accumulate, nor do I necessarily want to.

I find minimalism harsh and oppressive – not freeing – and I am sick of all those how-to declutter books, articles and hacks with their impossibly perfect pictures.

Let's be honest. Evil things are not going to happen because I have plastic bags holding plastic bags waiting to hold what is scooped out of the litter box, or because I have several days worth of dishes still sitting in the drain board.

I find it a waste of time to always have to open the cupboard to get out the pot and the pan I use almost every day, then open the cupboard to put them away again. I am perfectly content to wash them and set them back on the stove.

I think perhaps the woman who bore me turns over in her grave so as not to see them. The daughter of Italian immigrants, she was obsessively clean; she bought Lysol and bleach by the gallons, and washed above, behind, under and inside everything. The idea that cleanliness is next to godliness was part of her Catholic faith.

I have no doubt a psychologist would say I'm rebelling from all those years of being forced to pick up my toys and make my bed.

I don't buy into the idea that cleanliness is next to godliness, or the suggestion that decluttering your space of anything you haven't used in six months is a peaceful Zen meditation.

Yeah, yeah, I've been told that holding on to stuff is merely holding on to the past so as to avoid the future. I like to think that's not me, because I will declutter and clean … when it keeps me from having to engage in something I detest even more, such as shopping for a bathing suit or doing my taxes.

I don't like being judged by my floors, defined by what hides behind closet doors or evaluated because of the manner in which I have stored things in the garage. Drop in on short notice and you'll likely find clothing drying on hangers hooked over cabinet doorknobs and an overflowing recycle box.

Shoes will be where I kicked them off and mail too important to throw away, but not requiring immediate attention, will be piling up on flat surfaces.

I have all the classic kinds of clutter: trash-pretending-not-to-be clutter (clothes in the closet that no longer fit), almost clutter (the few things left on the table two days ago that are attracting more stuff), sentimental clutter (sweet memorabilia and gifts), just-in-case clutter (rags, orphan jar lids, single earrings) and carefully-labeled-and-stored clutter (stuff kept out of sight in coordinated boxes).

Clutterers Anonymous is a support group offering a 12-step recovery program for those addicted to clutter, but I have no intention of attending. I don't think I'm so much addicted as indifferent. I don't mind being surrounded by things I need and things I love.

After desperate and futile attempts to embrace one sure-not-to-fail method after another, I admit to inadequately being able to manage more than 87 percent of my belongings. It just takes a few days for it to burst out of control.

Rather than set myself up for continued failure, I have come to appreciate tolerance. I think a better 12-step program would teach people how to surrender to imperfection and live in harmony with their surroundings.

At the office, for instance, editing two papers and overseeing a special section meant I had a lot of paper on my desk. I wasn't ashamed. Rather, I was proud that, like me, Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein and Mark Twain all had messy workspaces.

Ditto for Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh and PayPal cofounder Max Levchin. Besides, recent studies have shown that people with disorganized desks are unconventional, creative and risk takers. Why else would I write an editorial about it? WHL

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

Celebrate May...

The 5th month of the year is one featuring lots of events. Here's a look at historical weather related statistics for some of them.

Cinco de Mayo – average low: 45, high: 68; record low: 30 (2005), high: 93 (1949).

Mother's Day, the 8th this year – average low: 45, high: 69; record low: 31 (1968), high: 92 (2000). Just a day later, the 9th, marks the latest recorded snow of 1.3" at Windsor Locks, where the official records are kept.

Memorial Day, falling on the 30th – average low: 52, high: 75; record low: 37 (1961), high: 93 (1987).

The hottest temperature recorded in this month was 99 degrees, that happened twice (on the 20th in 1996 and then again on the 26th in 2010).

Averages are calculated over a three-decade timespan, 1981-2010. Records have been kept for the Greater Hartford Area for over 110 years, dating back to 1905.

Some notable astronomical events happening this month:

On the 21st, the Full Flower Moon – marking fertility with the warmer temperatures, named for the abundance of flowers coming into full bloom. Concerned about when to plant? The average last frost happens early in the month, so plan for around the 2nd week or later.

Then on the 23rd, Mars will be its brightest in over a decade. **WHL**

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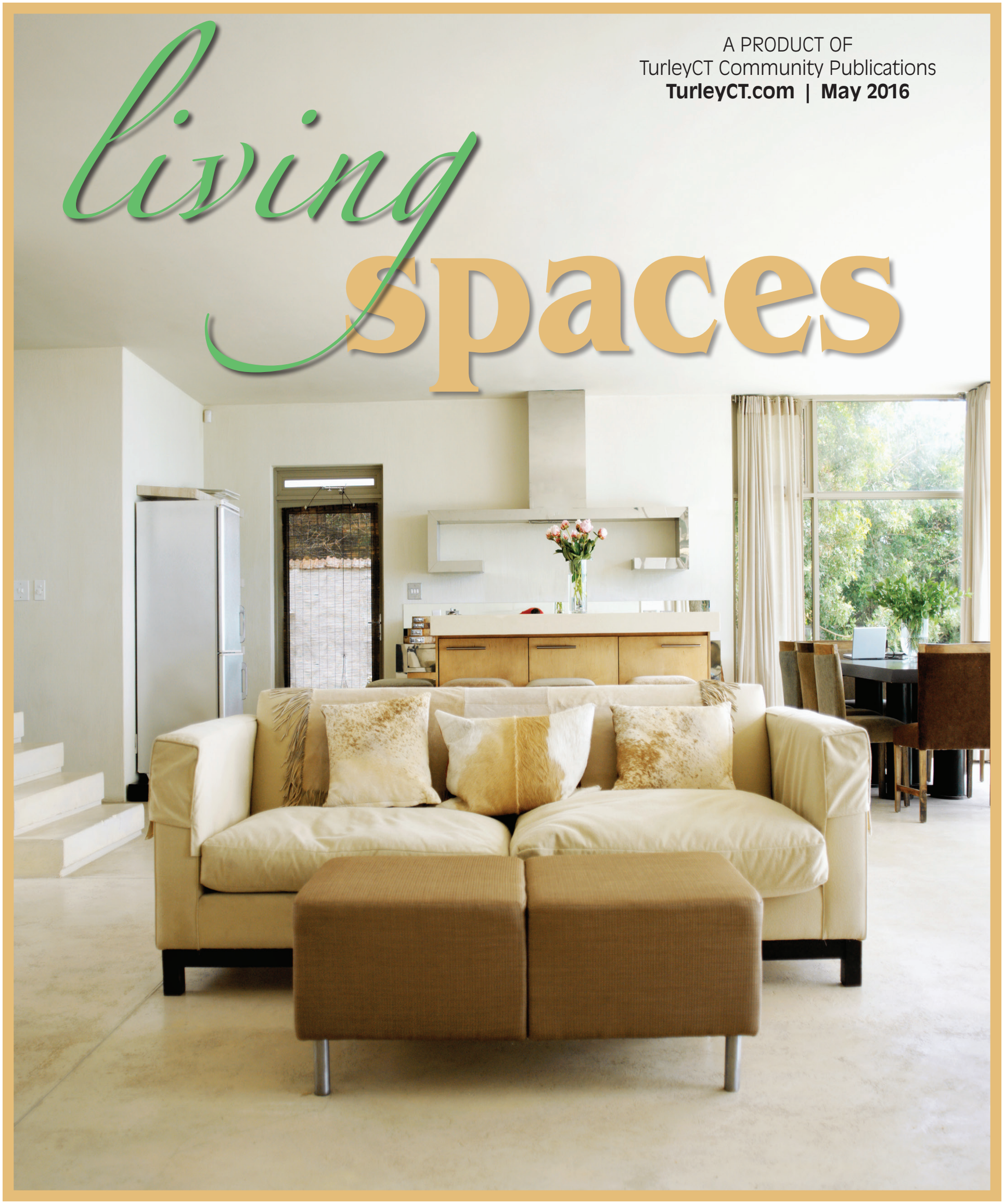

Room to spare

Consider the possibilities if you have an extra room

by Sloan Brewster
Staff Writer

Extra rooms in a home can be transformed into special spaces.

Thomas Mach, owner of In the House and Through the Garden in Simsbury, said he thought converting an empty bedroom into a craft room was a great idea.

"I know many people are doing that," he said.

A crafty space

Having done the same thing with a couple rooms in the store, Mach had some thoughts on how to perfect the space for its new use.

"Start with a paint job so it has a very different look," he said.

Big on environmental matters, Mach suggests going with an eco-friendly paint with a lot of pigment to add an exciting burst of color to the walls.

"Paints with a lot of pigment can give you depth of color," he said." This is an opportunity to have fun in the room so you can have a splash of color."

Once the room has a fresh coat, the next step is adding storage, because, Mach said, whatever the craft project is, there needs to be plenty of storage.

A common way to achieve that is by using lots of plastic containers, but Mach suggested a more attractive idea, noting it would also be cheaper than buying plastic crates; drop by a thrift store and pick up a vintage sideboard or hutch and upscale it with a bright splash of paint. Some of his customers have gone to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Bloomfield for such pieces.

"You could get an old piece of furniture and paint it and go a lot cheaper than bins," he said.

Making sure the room has quality lighting is the next important step in transforming the space, Mach said.

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Then get a nice table to sit down and get to work.

"What's trendy? Old farm tables have become very popular," he said, adding that it's time for more paint. "So, again, you're repurposing."

Repurposing antiques is not only trendy, but easy, he said.

"Nothing harder than pick a color and paint, no sanding no prepping," Mach said. "You just pick a color and paint."

Finally, add a finishing touch to make sure the room breathes inspiration, Mach said. He suggests putting up a bulletin board and affixing to it pictures or fabric swatches or whatever speaks to the crafts to be done in the room.

"Put stuff in that room that inspires you, to always give you ideas for other projects, almost like an idea board or an inspiration board."

Don't forget the important apps. Mach pointed out that Pinterest, Houzz and Instagram were critical to getting going.

"That will always give you fresh ideas and inspiration, plus you can share all your crafts with other people," he said.

With that, the room is ready for creating crafts.

"You've got lighting, you've got the inspiration, you've got the surface, storage," Mach said. "And now you just need some free time to finish what you do."

A fitness space

Since 1998, Frank Bentkowski, director of sales at Ultimate Fitness in Avon, has turned spare rooms into workout rooms.

"The first thing is to look at who in the household will be using the gym [and] what kinds of activities they enjoy doing," he said.

An important step before bringing in equipment is installing the right kind of flooring for working out. Bentkowski recommends interlocking rubber tiles.

Then look at the logistics of the room and decide if you want a sound system, a television or both.

"You always want to look at cardio," Bentkowski said of choosing equipment.

The cardio equipment is going to depend on a few different things. First, there's preference. Is the room for someone who likes to walk, bike, run or who does all the above?

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What is their skill set and do they need something that is easy on their ankles, or will help them with balance?

"You can have the exact replica of the experience in the gym," but that equipment will be costly, Bentkowski said.

Once the desired elliptical, stationary bike or treadmill has been chosen, it's time to consider strengthening equipment.

"For strength, you have to look at how skilled the individual is," he said.

There are different pieces of equipment from multi-stations that enable a person to work on every body part to more specialized units.

"To accompany that, I think it would be great to have a set of dumbbells," Bentkowski said.

Set them on a four-foot rack and get an adjustable bench to use them. Some people like a pull-up station as well, but they're not for everybody.

Finally, there needs to be an area for doing core work with a tri-fold mat or a yoga mat, and possibly some kettle balls.

A fun place for escape

Linda Black of Linda P. Black Interiors in West Hartford thought the best use for a spare room would be an adult game room – "an oasis," as she dubbed the room, a space to escape to at the end of a long day.

For resale purposes, Black said she felt it was important not to change the room's structure or anchor anything to the walls.

The room should be painted in soothing colors and be a luxurious, plush spot in which to relax and "veg out," Black said.

For her, there would be no phone in the room. While there may be a television, it would be hooked up to the laptop, so folks can get away from watching cable and watch shows online.

"Turn the phone off; just try to get to another space," she said. "Try to get away from the rest of the family, maybe try to get away from work."

She envisioned the space would be for a couple, like her own son and daughter-in-law, and would have two huge, oversized chairs.

"My son and his wife, they go home and play games," she said.

There would be a large chest between the chairs where the duo could each have a drink and where they would set their laptops. Both laptops would be connected to the TV so the couple could play games together.

While Black likes a contemporary look, she said she also likes a mix of styles and that the room can even be goofy.

It might also have magazines, newspapers and crossword puzzles on the chest or on the credenza where the television sits. There may also be books on shelves on either side of the credenza.

Stressing the importance of lighting, she said, "I like to have a multitude of different lighting in that room."

Ideas include recessed lighting and a lamp attached to the wall with a swing arm.

Hang an oversized picture of a beach or a favorite vacation spot, or someplace cheery or memorable, she said.

"It's nice to have, for instance, a little piece of where you've gone before," Black said. "Anything that cheers, ... brings another frame of mind. ... Some people like maps on the wall to figure where you're going next."

Books in the room can include travel books, and there may be items for folks to enjoy hobbies while they watch television, such as yarn and needles for knitting.

"I'm just thinking about a room where people can think of things other than work," Black said "You're trying to grab snippets of time to be with your loved ones." GL

Correction

In the Living Spaces section that ran in the April issue, the story "Staging to stay" incorrectly identified renovation photos for a bathroom. The images were the work of Tamatha Wolfel of Infinite Home Design in Wethersfield. The paper regrets the error.

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Cooking up kitchen makeovers

See what you can do with $500 and a weekend

by Lynn Woike
Staff Writer

Whether your home is large or small, the kitchen is bound to be the busiest room in the house and will generally show the signs of use more quickly.

We turned to Peter Lemos of DreamMaker Bath and Kitchen in Newington for some suggestions on how to spruce it up – all for less than $500, a few basic skills and a weekend or less of your time.

"The trick is to take your time and avoid using creative shortcuts to finish quickly," he said.

Cabinets typically take up the most space in a kitchen, and their finish becomes worn over time.

"A good paint job can add years of life to them," Lemos said, adding, "Invest in good paint ... either oil-based or latex paint. Latex is easier to apply and clean up, but many argue that oil will give you a sturdier finish and is worth the extra effort. Choose an eggshell or semi-gloss finish. Flat paint will look too dull and high gloss paint will emphasize any imperfections.

He recommends removing the doors and drawer fronts, cleaning all surfaces with a strong cleaner such as TSP, lightly sanding every surface to be painted, then using a tack cloth to remove any dust.

Whether you paint the cabinets or not, new pulls are a quick and inexpensive upgrade.

Knobs are easiest to replace since there is only one hole; replacing handles requires a bit more effort.

Noting that most kitchens are poorly lit, Lemos said, "You can add loads of style and function for very little investment with a few strategically placed lights to illuminate work areas or dining spaces, or to just add to the general brightness of the kitchen. A new set of track lights, pendant lights or undercabinet lights can be a huge but simple addition to any kitchen."

Choose fixtures that match your décor, he said, noting that an ornate traditional chandelier over a sleek, contemporary island will not look right. Pay special attention to high-use areas like countertops or islands; bright, directed lighting in these locations can minimize accidents.

LED light bulbs use 95 percent less electricity than do incandescent bulbs. While they cost more upfront, they last longer and emit far less heat than other bulbs.

Another way to update the kitchen is to install a new tile backsplash.

"For a few dollars per square foot and an afternoon of work, you can turn that dull space between your counters and upper cabinets into a virtuosic display of artistry," Lemos said.

"Gorgeous tiles in every color and texture imaginable are easily available and can be installed by most amateurs. You can find a good selection along with materials like adhesive and grout at your local home center. You will need to buy both field tiles and border tiles."

Lemos advises ordering at least 20 percent more than the square footage being covered to allow for fitting and waste. For a professional look, rent a wet saw to cut the tiles.

If you invest in these projects, "the payoff in style, function and economy will be priceless," Lemos said. GL

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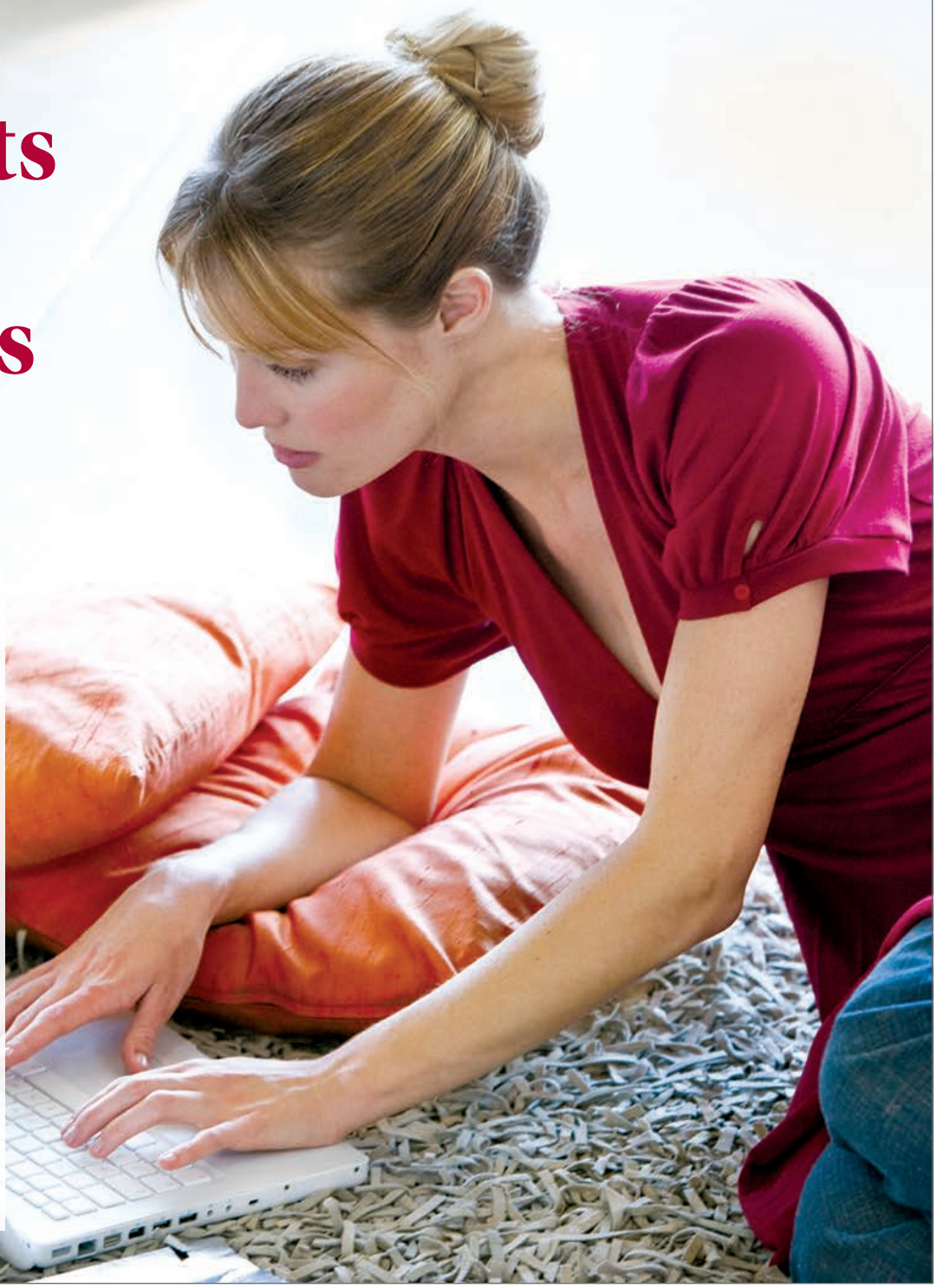
Businesses offer classes and blogs for great design at home

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer



Local experts share their decorating know-how through blogs and hands-on workshops. Here is what a few had to say as to how they inspire those wanting to try their hand at decorating themselves.

Vivid Hue Home

Walking into Vivid Hue Home is like walking into a kaleidoscope of color, an abundance of decorative home goods in blues, pinks greens and yellows.

At one time there was no brick and mortar place to shop, or actual store to shop in, rather, owner Heather Grahling sat at her computer writing a blog about decorating trends.

"Over time, readers expressed interest in the projects I was doing in my own home, so many of my posts became more personal," Grahling said. "I love pushing the boundaries with colors and patterns, and I think that my followers love to see how far I will go."

Some of those design ideas include wallpapering ceilings in her own home.

"I have always been passionate about decorating, and the blog was a terrific outlet in which to become a part of that world," Grahling said.

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In 2015, Grahling opened her shop in Farmington, bringing her ideas and the trends she wrote about out of the blogosphere and into living rooms.

Grahling did not give up her blog, however, as it continues to be a part of her shop's website.

"With the brick and mortar shop now open, I often use the blog as a way to convey the fun items that we are currently carrying in the shop," she said, adding that she also continues to write about do-it-yourself projects, showcasing local artists and designers and anything else that she feels "will be interesting to my readers and customers."

Through her blog, Grahling recently shared a personal story about her daughter's health and about her trip to the New York Now 2016 show, a post that included plenty of photos.

It is not just her blog that interests about 15,000 would-be decorators, but she has 11,000 followers on Facebook and 5,500 on Instagram.

"I utilize all aspects of social media to reach my readers," she said. "For example, even though I don't have an ecommerce website, I post most of the products from my shop on Instagram and Facebook. It gives my followers an idea of what we currently have, and I have even started shipping to all over the U.S. just based upon what viewers want from my Instagram feed."

Additionally, readers of her blog have asked her questions, and she has come to realize how deep this interaction can be for her followers.

"The blog makes a personal connection with the followers," Grahling said.

Vivid Hue Home is located at 775 Farmington Ave., or find the shop and Grahling's blog at vividhuehome.com. Follow her on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

In The House & Through The Garden

There is no reason to feel intimidated when taking a class at Simsbury's In The House & Through The Garden. They offer several classes and will walk a hopeful do-it-yourselfer through each and every step.

Thomas Mach opened his shop in the summer of 2015, and, right away, customers were intrigued with the Annie Sloan chalk painted items he had for sale. So much so that he stocks this special project paint and offers classes weekly.

The most popular class is "Annie Sloan 101" in which Mach said, "You learn all of Annie's different painting techniques and how to do modern or the

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rusty, chippy looks, two-color distressing," he said. The class also allows participants to learn how to mix colors.

"It's really the fundamental class, it's really hands-on," Mach said.

Participants paint their own board in order to get a feel for the paint and the finish they like. There is also an assortment of beer, wine, coffee, tea and appetizers to enjoy.

For those who do not already know, Annie Sloan is a British artist who developed her own paint specifically for refinishing furniture. The product is nontoxic, odorless and dries very quickly. The artist calls it chalk paint, even though there is no chalk in the product, but it does have a velvety finish. The paint is great for newbies because it does not require preparing a piece of furniture ahead of time and there is no priming or stripping necessary.

"Its not normal paint," Mach said. "It's not at all what you are used to using."

For those looking to move beyond the fundamentals, the shop's offerings continue with "I'm Having a Bad Chair Day," for those interested in painting fabric, which the Annie Sloan paint can also be used. There are also workshops for mirrors or picture frames for those who want to update something they already own.

Mach said, too, that he also does what he refers to as "Girls Night Out Evenings," in which a group of friends will come in to learn, sometimes for a bachelorette party or just to have fun with friends.

Other classes are for specific furniture refinishing projects, such as when participants bring in a coffee table or side table they own or found in a second hand shop and want to update.

"It's all about the workshops," Mach said.

The shop has 17 such events planned between April and June. Look for more information on its website www.inthehouseandthroughthegarden.com or visit it at 10 Jim Gallagher Way, Simsbury.

Cindarella's Attic

Cinda Fiamma of Cindarella's Attic in Wethersfield has been refinishing furniture for more than 30 years.

"I love it, it relaxes you so much," she said.

That might be easy for her to say since she has decades of experience, but Fiamma assures those who have never tried it that they can also find success.

She has been offering refinishing classes for three years at her shop at 59 Wells Road.

"When you leave my classes, you will know the four basic steps and a technique," she said.

The steps include cleaning the piece of furniture to be refinished, painting it with one or two coats with a chalk mineral-based paint, smoothing it down, and the final step, putting on a topcoat to seal it.

Her basic class starts off small. Fiamma gets kitchen cabinet doors from a company in Minnesota that typically have a small flaw in them so the company will not sell them. She uses the doors to teach her refinishing techniques, and participants leave with a freshly painted tray that they did.

Her other classes are the kind in which participants bring in their own piece of furniture, a class she typically restricts to two people.

This enables them to work on the piece, leave for lunch to give the paint time to cure, and come back to finish it later in the day.

"They just love it," Fiamma said, sharing the story about one customer who came in never having painted anything in her life, and she liked it so much she went home and refinished her entire bedroom set.

Fiamma said that for those who feel they might not have the artistic flair to try this, they, too, will like the finished piece. She will be there to walk them through each step.

For one thing, if it does not come out well, the American Paint Company paint she uses wipes off very easily.

"It's just a thing," she said. "You can't make a mistake."

These days, more clients are preferring to finish their piece with a distressed look, although she can teach them how to make a piece look modern or rustic or any number of other styles.

She also offers the Chippy Class, a technique that when done allows you to see layers of paint.

"Whatever they want to know, I have so many tricks I can show people, Fiamma said.

Cindarella's Attic is located at 59 Wells Road, Wethersfield. For more information visit cinda-rellasattic.com or call 860-563-0351. **GL**

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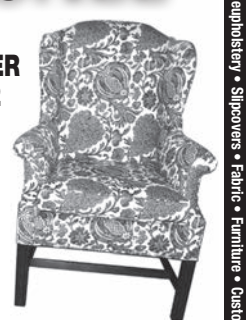

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How families can manage CRAMPED quarters

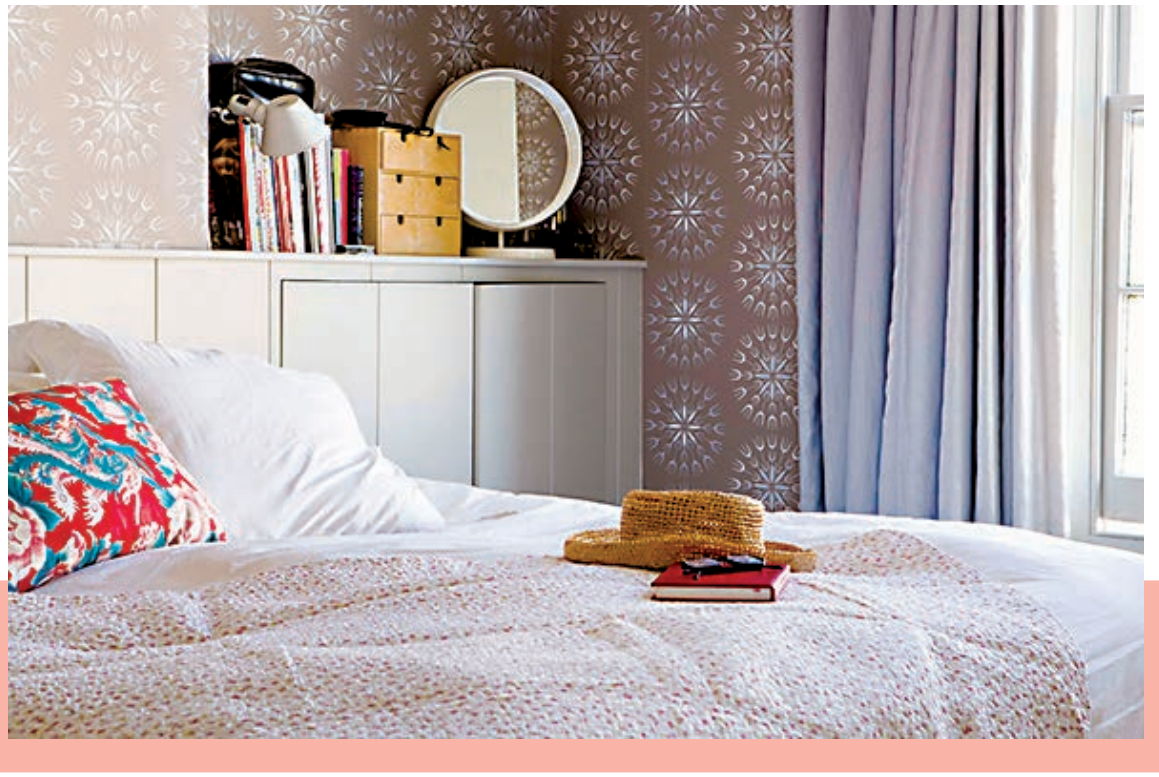
Young parents face difficult decisions regarding their living arrangements. The suburbs versus city debate is one many young married couples have had, and that discussion is often prompted by the arrival of children.

Even when choosing to live in the suburbs, starter homes for young couples and families may still leave space at a premium.

Choosing where to live is impacted by many factors, including commute time for working parents and school systems.

Sometimes, however, that means choosing a smaller home to start with and coping with cramped quarters. In these cases, parents need to get creative in order to live comfortably.

• Actively police clutter. Few things can make living spaces seem more cramped than clutter. Unsolicited mailings, old magazines and unused kitchenware are just a few of the items that can make small apartments seem even smaller. Discard junk mail the moment you walk through the door, making a daily effort to keep kitchen counters and tables, coffee tables and other areas that tend to accumulate clutter clear of clutter. Reducing clutter also makes homes safer for young children, making it easier for them to navigate a home

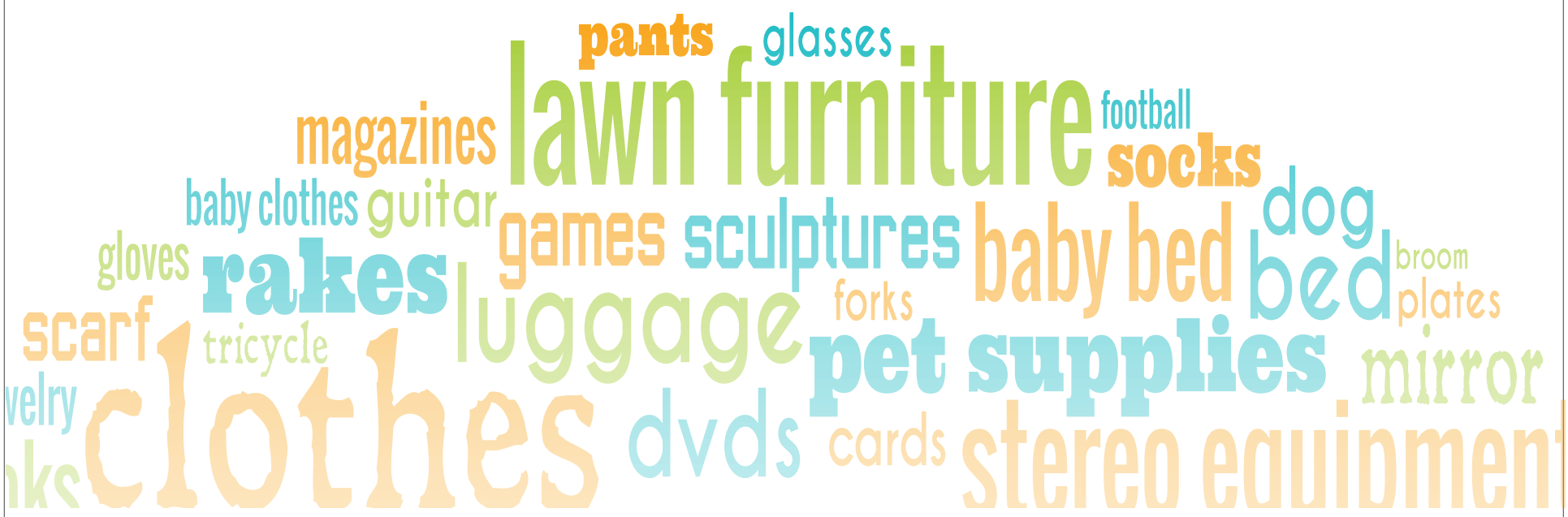


while reducing choking hazards.

• Keep hosting duties to a minimum. Many men and women love to host friends and family, and that desire to host won't subside simply because you have limited space for entertaining. But even if you love to host, host more intimate gatherings so you are not forced to use your already limited storage space to store items, such as extra plates, utensils and drinking glasses, that you will only use every so often. Fewer guests means fewer items you need to store year-round.

• Go easy on the tots' toys. Parents of young children know that kids' toys take up a lot of space, and that's space that many city dwellers simply don't have. Rather than adding to youngsters' toy stash each month, explain to them that space is limited and that some older toys will have to go before new ones can be purchased. Donate old toys and let kids know their items will be given to less fortunate youngsters, as that may make kids feel better about parting ways with their toys. Set a good example by showing kids when you discard or donate older items before replacing them with new ones.

• Think vertically. Single-family home owners may not need to make much use of the vertical space in their homes, but such is not often the case with apartment dwellers or those living in condominiums or town homes. Utilizing vertical space in can be as simple as buying some shelving units or bookcases. To be safe, keep items the kids will use on lower shelves so they are not tempted to do some climbing to reach their toys or books. GL



Out of Sight

How and where to get rid of what you no longer want or need

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Once spring cleaning is done, there will be a collection of items that are no longer wanted. Three things can be done with them: toss, sell or donate.

Items that are broken, stained or worn out should be thrown away. Be sure to check which items can be recycled and which ones will need a bulky waste pickup.

Some items will be good enough to sell.

Ralph Labozzo, appraiser and auctioneer at Golden Gavel, said the business services customers who want a few items appraised and those who want the entire contents of a house dealt with and the premises swept clean.

Right now, he said, vintage comic books from the late 1950s and early 1960s are hot sellers – those with a cover price of 10¢, 12¢ or 15¢. Super heroes from the Golden Age (think Superman) to the Silver Age (think Batman) are all in demand.

In addition to comic books, Labozzo said musical instruments are selling well (think guitars and vintage saxophones). The same is true for Halloween and other holiday -themed ephermera from the early 1900s, and both vintage and contemporary game room items such as pinball and arcade games.

First edition leather bound limited edition books, especially if signed, along with coffee table books on the arts sell at auction.

There is no fee or obligation to have someone from the auction house come out and assess the items. Pick up would be scheduled for another time.

Items can also be sold online. Craigslist is especially good for large items that are difficult to pack and ship. It also saves you the service fee charged by eBay and Amazon.

Many clothing, accessories, jewelry and decorative items can be

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taken to a consignment shop provided they are in excellent condition. Items are priced with consideration given to condition, quality, brand, age, original purchase price, style and buyer demand. Consigners generally get between 40 percent and 55 percent of the sale price. A store's website will provide lists of items accepted – and those that are not – along with terms and conditions.

Some consignment shops deal specifically with furniture and other home accessories.

Sheri Jackson, longtime owner of Gillette Furniture Consignment in Wethersfield, said, "We love when people spring clean because we are often times the right fit for their lovely furniture and home décor."

Pub tables, sofas and desks are always in demand, along with console, coffee and end tables, and dining and bedroom sets, she said.

When working with large pieces of furniture, it's a common practice to begin with customers emailing photos of the items they would like to consign.

"We want to see what it is," Jackson said.

Style, condition and quality are all taken into account.

"We like to find the next happy home for their piece," she said.

Holding a tag sale is another way to get rid of just about anything. Try recruiting others in the area to join you – neighborhood sales attract more shoppers.

Most items in good condition can be donated, and most donations will be tax deductible. In addition to well-known organizations such as Goodwill and Savers, here are some places you can bring items.

Electronics

Your town's transfer station

Every town is required to establish a convenient location for recycling residential electronics such as computers, printers and televisions. For specifics, contact your town. Information is also listed on the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's website at ct.gov/deep.

Green Monster
260 Brook Street
West Hartford
860-897-1426
greenmonsterecycling.com
Just about anything with a cord or that operated on batteries can be brought to this recycling center for free. Hard drives are destroyed and nothing ends up in a landfill. The only items not accepted are washers, dryers, microwaves, vacuums, and appliances with refrigerant such as refrigerators, dehumidifiers, air conditioners and water coolers.

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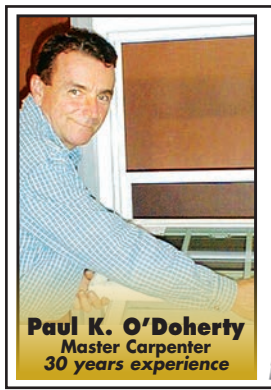

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LIVING Spaces

Furniture

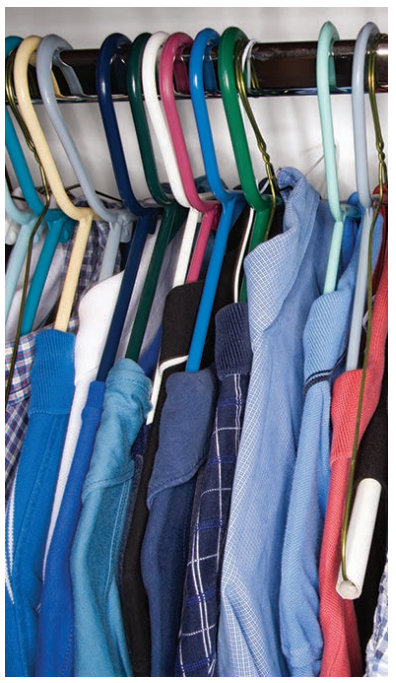
A Hand Up Inc.
860-424-2980
ahandupinc.org
This organization based in West Hartford helps people transition from the streets into homes. Items must be new or gently used, modestly sized, basic and practical. Its current wish list includes twin and full bed frames, small sofas and love seats, small armchairs and recliners, dressers, nightstands, bookcases, end and coffee tables, television stands, lamps, kitchen tables and chairs. Pickups can be scheduled. Arrangements must also be made for dropping items off at the warehouse on Talcott Road in West Hartford. For more details, see ahandupinc.org/wish-list/.

Habitat for Humanity ReStore
500 Cottage Grove Road
Bloomfield
860-519-0828
hartfordhabitat.org/restore
This home improvement and donation center sells new and gently used furniture, home accessories and appliances. Pickups can be arranged.

Building materials

The ReCONNstruction Center
731 New Britain Ave.
Newington
860-597-3390
reconnstruction
center.org
This charitable organization accepts good quality, new, pre-owned, antique, surplus and reusable building materials, lighting fixtures, appliances, kitchen cabinets, plumbing fixtures, doors, paint, wood stoves, commercial shelving, tools, architectural salvage, and replacement and original vinyl windows. Pickups can be arranged at no charge.

Habitat for Humanity ReStore
500 Cottage Grove Road
Bloomfield
860-519-0828
hartfordhabitat.org/restore
This center accepts building materials including cabinets, countertops, electical hardware, roofing materials, paint, wallcovering, tile, floor coverings, doors, windows, plumbing materials, cinderblocks and bricks. For donation pickups, email photos of items to barbara@hartfordhabitat.org, along with your name, address and phone number.



Clothing

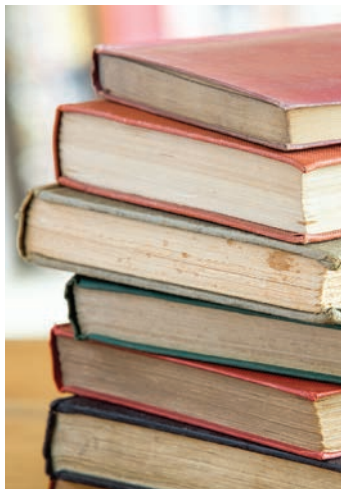
The Clothes Horse
175 Park Road
West Hartford
860-233-1411
This thrift shop operated by the Junior League of Hartford accepts current fashions and accessories for women, men and teens, including outerwear, tuxedos and gowns, and vintage clothing and accessories. Everything must be clean and free of rips, stains and fading.

University of Connecticut Health Center Auxiliary Thrift Shop
270 Park Road
West Hartford
860-586-8047
Run by volunteers, this shop accepts high-quality used clothing and shoes for men and women, jewelry and handbags. Unsold or unwanted clothing is donated to other organizations that assist those in need.

Market Square Thrift Shop
230 Market Square, Rear
Newington
860-667-7174
This shop, benefiting the Church of Christ Congregational, accepts men's, women's and children's clothing, jewelry and accessories.

Favarh Thrift Shop
250 Albany Turnpike
Canton
860-693-2899
favarh.org
The shop accepts men's and women's clothing, shoes and accessories. Donations can also be left at Favarh's main office at 225 Commerce Drive in Canton.

Second Chance Shop
730 Hebron Avenue
Glastonbury
860-633-5188
and
12 Station Street
Simsbury
860-658-7152
Items that can be donated include clothing for infants, children, men and women, along with accessories such as purses, hats, ties, scarves and jewelry. Run by auxiliary volunteers proceeds, from these shops benefit the programs and services of The Village for Families and Children.



Books

Your library's used book sale

On the Road Bookshop
163 Albany Turnpike
Canton
860-693-6029
ontheroadbookshop.com
This store buys books in most subject areas, including art, Eastern and
Western philosophy, literature, scholarly books, very old books, leather sets and some recent textbooks. No romance novels, Reader's Digest books or book club editions are accepted. Book-related items such as bookends, bookstands, prints and ephemera are also purchased. If you have too many to bring in, someone will come to you. The owner urges people to call before throwing out anything. Store credit is also offered.

Housewares

The gift shop at your local senior center

The swap shack at your town's transfer station

Favarh Thrift Shop
250 Albany Turnpike
Canton
860-693-2899
favarh.org
The shop accepts housewares and giftware. Donations may also be left at Favarh's main office at 225 Commerce Drive in Canton.

A Hand Up Inc.
860-424-2980
ahandupinc.org
Items being accepted are pots, pans, dishes, glassware, coffee makers, microwaves, silverware, bakeware, mixing bowls, storage canisters, cooking utensils and small appliances. No formal china, stemware or high-end appliances. Clean and gently used sheets, blankets, comforters, mattress covers, towels, pot holders, bath mats, shower curtains, and small rugs may also be donated. Pickups and dropoffs need to be scheduled.

LIVING Spaces

Market Square Thrift Shop
230 Market Square, Rear
Newington
860-667-7174
This thrift shop benefiting the Church of Christ Congregational, accepts small household appliances, dishes and glassware, home goods, gift items, toys and games.

The Clothes Horse
175 Park Road
West Hartford
860-233-1411
Among the items accepted are artwork, pottery, paintings, prints, housewares, books, decorations, unopened gifts and holiday items.

Second Chance Shop
730 Hebron Avenue
Glastonbury
860-633-5188
and
12 Station Street
Simsbury
860-658-7152
The shops accept household items such as china, glasses, linens, antiques and collectibles. No furniture, beds, cribs, strollers, car seats, exercise equipment or appliances can be donated. Run by auxiliary volunteers, proceeds from these shops benefit the work of The Village for Families and Children.

Bicycles

Simsbury Free Bike
828 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury
860-841-2611
simsbury.bike
This free multi-town bike share program accepts bikes that are in good condition (no rust, no repairs needed). Bikes left at The Bicycle Cellar at 532 Hopmeadow Street will be brought to Simsbury Free Bike.

Household hazardous waste

Special collections are held for household hazardous waste that is generally defined as toxic, flammable, reactive or corrosive materials. These include oil-based paints, thinners, pool chemicals, pesticides, mercury fever thermometers and gasoline.

April 30, Farmington Farmington High School, 10 Monteith Drive, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Simsbury, Avon and Canton residents.)

May 7, Newington, Town Garage, 281 Milk Lane, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Rocky Hill, West Hartford and Wethersfield residents.)

June 12, West Hartford, Emanuel Synagogue, 160 Mohegan Drive, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield residents.)

June 18, Simsbury, Public Works Facility, 66 Town Forest Road, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Farmington, Avon and Canton residents.)

June 25, Wethersfield, Webb School, 51 Willow Street, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, Rocky Hill and West Hartford residents.)

July 9, Rocky Hill, Stevens School, 322 Orchard Street, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, West Hartford and Wethersfield residents.)

September 24, West Hartford, Public Works Garage, Oakwood Avenue, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield residents.) **GL**

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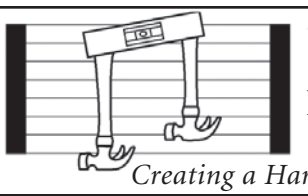
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